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SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN

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SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN

HIS LIFE AND TIMES

BY

C. WHITAKER-WILSON

WITH THIRTY-FIVE PLATES

NEW YORK

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MCMXXXII

PROLOGUE

I HAVE long since come to the conclusion that all Prologues in books are really Epilogues inasmuch as they are invariably written after the text has been completed. I make no apology here for admitting that in trying to foreshadow for the reader's sake the general intent and purpose of this volume, I am actually looking back over my typescript pages at what I have been able to record of the amazing genius of my subject. On the other hand, it occurs to me that this book really needs a Prologue, even if it be a fact that Wren needs no introduction.

If I am to be true to the idea and conception of a Prologue, and if I am to exhibit any honesty in the matter at all, it can only be when I confess that my first and chief reason for probing into the life of one of the most spectacular characters in an age that assuredly abounded in spectacular characters, is (not was) the instinctive attraction I always feel for his genius on entering one of his creations. I feel I must meet the man himself.

Secondly, it is the tercentenary of his birth on the twentieth day of October 1632; he will then have been born, so to speak, exactly three centuries. Making the fact an excuse, if not a reason for wishing to become acquainted with Sir Christopher Wren, I intend, for the next two and a half months, to 'live' in the seventeenth century. I trust I shall escape the Plague and that my house will escape the Fire. I intend to come to know John Evelyn and Samuel Pepys; I am desirous of meeting Dean Sancroft (Dean of St. Paul's), and Dr. John Wilkins, Warden of Wadham College, Oxford. Perhaps one of these gentlemen will present me to his Majesty King Charles

II ; this must be arranged, if possible, because the King is on close terms of friendship with his Surveyor-General.

After all, I am a hot Royalist and no believer in Oliver Cromwell ; I trust the fact will stand me in good stead. It should do ; King Charles is very approachable so long as one wears Cavalier dress and is thoroughly loyal to the Royalist cause. I *am* loyal, and I shall wear a becoming wig and suitable clothing. King Charles will have no cause to be ashamed of me.

When I am actually introduced to Sir Christopher Wren I shall be a little nervous at first ; he is a busy man and may object to being approached for an ' interview.' I heartily agree with him ; I should explode with rage if any one approached me for such a purpose.

I feel I know what he will say to me. ' So you want to write my life ? What are your qualifications ? May I ask if you are an architect ? ' This last question will be a trifle disturbing because I shall have to confess that I am not. If he says ' What *are* you, then ? ' I shall have to say that I am a practising musician--an organist and a composer, amongst other things--but I shall quickly add (before he can offer any adverse comment) that I have devoted more years than I care to count to the study of ecclesiastical architecture, and that I am so deeply interested in Renaissance in England that he can rely on my complete sympathy with all he will have to show me. Unless he turns away in disgust I shall take leave to point out that, being a devoted student of the Renaissance movement as I find it expressed in the days in which I live, namely, the seventeenth century, and also being equally devoted to the person of King Charles, I lay some claim to being capable of carrying out the work I propose to do.

I think that will be sufficient to win his sympathy, especially if we find ourselves comparing notes on the appalling times we have recently gone through during the Commonwealth or, as I shall say, the *Commonpoverty* period.

After that it will be easy enough ; I shall persuade him

to tell me all about his early days at East Knoyle, Windsor, and Westminster; he will want to show me all his inventions and dilate upon his various scientific and astronomical theories; I shall also hear all about his numerous academical honours and distinctions, and may even be taken to some of the meetings of the Royal Society, especially while he is President.

That, I consider, is writing a Prologue to a biography, inasmuch as it explains the motives actuating what the author is *about to do*; but I am forced, at this point, to alter my tenses and change my Prologue into an Epilogue in order to explain what I *have done*.

For two and a half months I *did* 'live' in the seventeenth century, to the complete distress of my household. During those ten weeks I spent every available moment researching in the British Museum. Each succeeding visit resulted in application for further bibliography, my particular corner of the North Library presenting such an appearance that I was really ashamed of the number of books I had asked leave to examine.

As a beginning to my research, I think I can honestly say I devoured every available scrap of information bearing upon 'my man' that I could extract from contemporary writings; this I followed with a still vaster quantity of literature referring to life in London from the time of Elizabeth to that of George I. Finally, I applied for nearly every work on Wren or his buildings that the Museum contains. The courtesy and, I may add, the profound knowledge I found the officials in that truly wonderful place to exhibit made my task easier than it otherwise would have been.

My reasons for probing into the life of one of our greatest Englishmen, summarized, are (1) a desire to wish him 'many happy returns' of his three hundredth birthday; (2) a biographical desire to portray his character as I found it to be; (3) an extension of this latter desire towards his friends and such enemies as he had; (4) a desire to offer some untechnical descriptions of the creations of his genius; (5) a strong desire to indulge in an historian's

recreation by an attempt to present a vivid picture of my favourite period in English history.

If, in the fourth of these sections, I have written as an amateur (*i.e.* a lover), I trust it has not been in an amateurish fashion; if, in the fifth, I have tried to forget that either the reader or I live in the twentieth century, I trust the result has not been to the detriment of the book.

I have avoided formality wherever I have been able, but I have adhered to chronology where it has been possible. I have invented conversations and possible situations where I have found the chain of history to contain broken links, basing such informalities on any contemporary evidence I could collect for the purpose.

I doubt if I have said much that is new; I equally doubt whether it is at all possible to say much that has not already been said *somewhere*. At the same time, I have made an honest attempt to avoid saying anything that is not worth saying.

Without in the least presuming to criticize what I have read, I should like to point out that hardly a single book that I have examined has given a complete and consequent account of Wren's life, though it is all to be found if one does not mind reading several volumes for the purpose.

The difference of opinion that exists between people (who seem to know what they are talking about) is absolutely amazing; it is certainly very disturbing. In many instances I have gone by the general consensus of opinion; in others I have been forced to make decisions; in others, again, I have given my own thoughts.

The amount of architectural jargon I have waded through, the technical squabbles and hair-splitting, the nauseating adulation, as well as the irritating and often ignorant condemnation of points in Wren's work that matter—sometimes those that do not—have been enough to prevent me from entering into any technical fray.

Thus, this volume has only nominal architectural value; it hardly could have more, as I am not an architect. On the other hand, I am daring to hope (looking back over my typescript pages) that the book will be found sufficiently

complete to stimulate a revival of interest in Wren at the time of his tercentenary ; that it will encourage dwellers in the London he would have designed, had he been allowed, to visit what he *was* permitted to do ; and that it will serve as some sort of guide to visitors from other lands—America, especially—who may find their pleasure enhanced by having first perused an account of the times in which he lived.

Acknowledgments of many kindnesses shown to me by those to whom I went for advice, and some permissions for reproduction in the matter of illustrations will be found on pp. xv and xvi. There is also a list of the more important works I have consulted.

C. WHITAKER-WILSON

PINNER, MIDDLESEX
January 1932

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PROLOGUE	v
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	xiii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xv
WORKS CONSULTED	xvii
CHAP.	
I. EARLY DAYS	i
II. AT WESTMINSTER SCHOOL	8
III. AT OXFORD	22
IV. GRESHAM PROFESSOR	31
V. SAVILLIAN PROFESSOR AT OXFORD	40
VI. THE GREAT PLAGUE: WREN GOES TO PARIS	51
VII. SURVEYING OLD ST. PAUL'S	65
VIII. THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON	85
IX. SURVEYOR-GENERAL	101
X. DEAN SANCROFT WRITES SOME LETTERS	124
XI. THE DESIGNS FOR ST. PAUL'S	131
XII. WREN BUILDS HIS CATHEDRAL	142
XIII. THE PARISH CHURCHES	167
XIV. THE SECULAR BUILDINGS	206
XV. WREN'S LAST YEARS	232
XVI. THE RECENT RESTORATIONS AT ST. PAUL'S	255
CLASSIFIED LIST OF WREN'S WORKS	263
INDEX	266

	FACING PAGE
ST. NICHOLAS COLE ABBEY*	168
ST. STEPHEN'S, WALBROOK*	169
TOWER OF ST. DUNSTAN-IN-THE-EAST*	170
TOWER OF ST. MICHAEL, CORNHILL*	170
ST. MICHAEL, CORNHILL, INTERIOR*	171
VESTRY IN ST. LAWRENCE JEWRY	174
<i>Photo, H. Bedford Lemere</i>	
PULPIT IN CHRIST CHURCH, GREYFRIARS*	175
TOWER OF ST. MARY-LE-BOW, CHEAPSIDE*	178
STEEPLE OF ST. VEDAST, FOSTER LANE*	179
STEEPLE OF ST. BRIDE, FLEET STREET*	179
ST. CLEMENT DANES, STRAND, INTERIOR*	180
ST. MARY ALDERMARY, INTERIOR	181
<i>By permission of the Rector</i>	
ST. MARY ABCHURCH, INTERIOR*	184
ST. MAGNUS-THE-MARTYR, INTERIOR	185
<i>Photo, Henry Flett</i>	
THE MONUMENT, FISH STREET HILL	212
<i>Photo, Topical</i>	
THE TOM TOWER, OXFORD	212
<i>Photo, Valentine</i>	
LIBRARY AT TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE	213
<i>Photo, Valentine</i>	
GREENWICH HOSPITAL*	218
HAMPTON COURT PALACE.	219
<i>Photo, Valentine</i>	

* From photographs by F. Muller

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TO the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's I offer my thanks for permission to reproduce the picture called the 'Broken Tie' (p. 155), and for allowing me to visit parts of the cathedral not accessible to the public.

I wish also to thank those photographers whose names appear in the List of Illustrations for permission to reproduce their various pictures. This includes those Rectors who so readily allowed me to use existing pictures of their several churches, those who allowed Mr. F. Muller to photograph interiors, as well as the directors of city firms who offered him (and myself) facilities for obtaining good views of Wren's towers from the roofs of their offices.

Mr. Muller is responsible for no less than twelve of the illustrations; I take this opportunity of thanking him for the trouble he took over them.

Again, I wish sincerely to thank Mr. Cecil Brown for much valuable illustrative matter. He is responsible for the superimposition of the outline of the present St. Paul's upon the drawing of the old cathedral; for the Grinling Gibbons Cherubs; for the plan of St. Paul's in isometric projection; for the illustration to the glossary on page 144; and for the exquisite impression of the cathedral at night (p. 166).

I must explain here that, before I saw the last-mentioned drawing, I had written the final paragraph on that page, in which I had made a fantastic reference to Wren walking 'the nave of the house he had builded.' There is a figure in Mr. Brown's picture, but in his mind it is merely that of a night-watchman. Perhaps he will forgive me for *pretending* it to be that of the *architect*, just for the sake of enhancing the fantasy I have written around what I have called his *Symphony in Stone*.

I have now a somewhat strange story to tell. After I had passed my proofs for press, a notice of the forthcoming issue of this work appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement*. This chanced to be read by Professor Edward Bensly, M.A., F.R.S.L., Lecturer in Mediæval and Renaissance Latin Literature in the University of Wales.

Professor Bensly at once wrote to me, saying that while examining Latin MSS in the National Library of Wales a work by Christopher Helwig (*Theatrum Historicum*, 1618) came under his notice. This book once belonged to Dean Wren, the architect's father, who recorded on an interleaf particulars of the births and deaths of his eleven children. The entries are in Latin.

The book passed into the hands of Lewis Morris, the poet and antiquary, who died in 1765; eventually it was bequeathed, with other MSS, to the National Library of Wales by his great-grandson, Sir Lewis Morris.

Apparently no one suspected the existence of Dean Wren's document until Professor Bensly found it. The arrival of this valuable information reached me too late to include it in the text of Chapter I, where it rightfully belongs; all I have been able to do—for this edition, at all events—is to add an explanation of the photograph of the entries as a footnote to page 7, where there fortunately happened to be a space.

Owing to Professor Bensly's discovery (and kindly action towards myself), I am able to correct the inaccuracies that have appeared in *all* previous biographies regarding the Wren family. A study of the latter half of page 2, together with the footnote to page 7, should make the whole matter quite clear.

It now remains for me to thank the Authorities at the National Library of Wales for sending me a photograph of the document for publication. So far as Professor Bensly is concerned, I find it indeed difficult to express the depth of my gratitude to him for his goodness in writing to me at such length and with such care as to details regarding his discovery

C. WHITAKER-WILSON

WORKS CONSULTED

BIOGRAPHIES OF SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN

1. ELMES, JAMES : *Life of Sir Christopher Wren.*
2. ELMES, JAMES : *Sir Christopher Wren and his Times.*
3. INSTITUTE OF BRITISH ARCHITECTS : *The Bi-Centenary of the Death of Sir Christopher Wren.*
4. MILMAN, LENA : *Sir Christopher Wren.*
5. PHILLIMORE, LUCY : *Sir Christopher Wren and his Times.*
6. STRATTON, A. : *Life, Work, and Influence of Sir Christopher Wren.*
7. WEAVER, SIR LAWRENCE : *Sir Christopher Wren.*
8. WREN, CHRISTOPHER (JUNR.) : *Life and Works of Sir Christopher Wren.*
9. WREN, STEPHEN : *Parentalia* (1750).

LONDON

10. ALLEN, THOMAS : *History and Antiquities of London.*
11. BESANT, SIR WALTER : *The Survey of London.*
12. BESANT, SIR WALTER : *London in the Time of the Stuarts.*
13. ENTICK, JOHN : *A New and Accurate History of London* (1766).
14. FAULKNER : *History of Kensington.*
15. GRAUNT, JOHN : *Bills of Mortality for 1665 (Plague Year).*

16. HOWARTH : *Greenwich Past and Present*.
17. HOWELL, JAMES : *Londinopolis* (1657).
18. HUNTER, HENRY : *History of London* (1811).
19. L'ESTRANGE : *Greenwich Palace and Hospital*.
20. MAITLAND, WILLIAM : *History of London* (1739).
21. PEARCE, ROBERT : *History of London*.
22. SMITH, J. T. : *Antient Topography of London*.
23. STOW, JOHN : *Survey of London* (1720 Ed.).
24. WHEATLEY, H. B. : *London Past and Present*.
25. *City Remembrances (Plague, Fire, and Great Storm)*.

ST. PAUL'S

26. ALEXANDER, CANON : *The Safety of St. Paul's* (1927).
27. BENHAM, WILLIAM : *Old St. Paul's Cathedral*.
28. CLINCH, GEORGE : *St. Paul's Cathedral*.
29. DUGDALE, SIR WILLIAM : *History of St. Paul's Cathedral*.
30. FROST, W. A. : *Early Recollections of St. Paul's Cathedral*.
31. GODWIN, G. : *A History and Description of St. Paul's Cathedral*.
32. GWILT, J. : *Account of St. Paul's Cathedral*.
33. LONGMAN, W. : *History of Three Cathedrals of St. Paul*.
34. MILMAN, DEAN : *Annals of Old St. Paul's*.
35. NEWBOLT, CANON : *St. Paul's Cathedral*.
36. PILKINGTON, REV. J. : *The Burnynge of Paules Church, 1561* (1563).
37. RUSSELL, REV. W. : *St. Paul's in the Early Nineteenth Century*.
38. SPARROW SIMPSON : *Chapters in the History of Old St. Paul's*.
39. " " *Gleanings from Old St. Paul's*.
40. " " *St. Paul's and Old City Life*.

41. SINCLAIR, ARCHDEACON : *Memorials of St. Paul's.*
42. WARNER, S. A. : *St. Paul's Cathedral.*
43. WREN SOCIETY : Publications of.

HISTORICAL MATTER : DIARIES, ETC.

44. BELL, W. G. : *The Great Fire of London.*
45. DEFOE, DANIEL : *Journal of the Plague Year.*
46. EVELYN, JOHN : *Diary, and several of his Works.*
47. OSBORN, FRANCIS : *Traditional Memoyres of the Raigne of King James.*
48. PEPYS, SAMUEL : *Diary and Correspondence.*
49. SERGEAUNT, J. : *Annals of Westminster School.*
50. TASWELL, WILLIAM : *Autobiography.*
51. WEAVER : *Ancient Funeral Monuments* (1631).
52. WELD : *History of the Royal Society.*
53. SPRAT, THOMAS : *History of the Royal Society.*
54. BIRCH, THOMAS : *History of the Royal Society.*

CHURCHES AND RENAISSANCE ART

55. BIRCH : *London Churches.*
56. BLOMFIELD, REGINALD : *Renaissance Architecture in England.*
57. PAPWORTH : *Renaissance Architecture in England.*
58. BELCHER AND MACARTNEY : *Later Renaissance Art in England.*
59. MOORE, C. H. : *Character of Renaissance Architecture.*
60. DAVISON, T. R. : *Wren's City Churches.*
61. LOFTIE, W. J. : *Inigo Jones and Wren.*
62. MACMURDO, A. H. : *Wren's City Churches.*
63. WARE, ISAAC : *Designs of Inigo Jones.*

GENERAL BIOGRAPHY

64. AUBREY, JOHN : *Life and Times of Anthony à Wood.*
65. BRITTON, JOHN : *Memoir of John Aubrey.*
66. BEDE : *Historia Ecclesiastica.*
67. BIRCH, THOMAS : *Life and Works of Robert Boyle.*
68. BURGON, J. M. : *Life and Times of Sir Thomas Gresham.*
69. BURNET, GILBERT : *History of my own Time (for William III).*
70. CHANCELLOR, E. B. : *Life of Charles I.*
71. CLARKE, J. S. : *Life of James II.*
72. GARDINER, S. R. : *History of the Great Civil War.*
73. „ „ *Oliver Cromwell.*
74. KER, JOHN : *Memoirs (1727).*
75. SHAW, W. : *History of the English Church during the Civil Wars.*
76. STILES, H. R. : *Ancient Windsor.*
77. WARD : *Lives of the Gresham Professors.*

Also numerous articles in the Cambridge Edition of *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1911); Harmsworth's *Universal Encyclopædia*; Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*; and Volumes 19 and 20 of *The Historian's History of the World*, which, lying on the shelves in my study, have been almost hourly consulted during the writing of certain sections of the book.

C. W.-W.

SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN

CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS

TO read the life of almost any really great man is to find that circumstances and surroundings play a large part in determining the course of that life, environment often proving to be a force only a degree less powerful than the strongest force of all—heredity.

While it may be true in the material sense that none of us has ever brought anything into this world, or taken anything out of it, it would seem to be an elementary psychological fact that we bring with us a very great deal in the way of inherited gift and genius, and also that we take out with us the sum-total of our experience. Otherwise it is difficult to see the reason for many lives, great or small.

Not every great man was born of the seventh generation of genius as was John Sebastian Bach ; still fewer managed to leave behind them such talented progeny as he did, or to find themselves in company with over a hundred relatives, all devoted to a single art. These things occur very rarely. Nevertheless, the story of most great lives is a portrayal of convergencies of circumstance and hereditary tendency.

It was certainly so in the case of Sir Christopher Wren, whose success as an architect came about as much by circumstance as it sprang from hereditary gifts. His was the sort of genius that might have made anything of him ; he need not necessarily have been an architect. He probably would not have devoted himself entirely to architecture

for so long a period in his long and active life, but for circumstance. That he inherited his powers of construction will be shown later.

From the very beginning he was fortunate in his home surroundings; they were of the utmost refinement. An atmosphere of learning and culture pervaded the pleasant little vicarage of East Knoyle, in Wiltshire. His father, Dr. Christopher Wren, was in many ways a man of outstanding personality. For that matter, such a description would fit any of the Wrens, for a more determined family would have been difficult to find, even in those days when determination counted for much.

At the time Christopher was born Dr. Wren was Rector of East Knoyle, a benefice to which he had probably been appointed under the Crown. He was said to have been descended from an ancient Danish family that had originally settled in Durham, but there is very little evidence to prove that this was actually the case.

In *Parentalia*, a work devoted to some account of the doings of the Wrens, written by Sir Christopher Wren's son—also a Christopher—and published by the architect's grandson Stephen in 1750, from which much of our information has been obtained, it is distinctly stated that the subject of this work was an only son though there were five girls by the marriage.¹ On the other hand, a baptismal date in 1631 records the birth of a male child who, seemingly, died in infancy. He, also, was named Christopher. It is therefore probable that Dr. Wren wished to have a son named after himself, and that after the death of this first child he carried out his intention when the second son was born on October 20, 1632. It is also reasonable to suppose that Sir Christopher was never told of the existence of this elder brother, which accounts, of course, for the statement in *Parentalia* that he was the only son of his father.

Very little is known about Christopher Wren's mother beyond the fact that her maiden name was Mary Cox, and that she was the daughter of Robert Cox of Fonthill, Wilts.

¹ This is inaccurate. See footnote to page 7.

Christopher, like most geniuses, exhibited remarkable powers in childhood, but the story of his early days is by no means a recital of prodigious acts such as Mozart, for example, was capable of performing. It was, perhaps, as well; genius, when it takes a very young frame by storm and shakes it to pieces by over-developing the brain at the expense of the body, has a regrettable way of killing its victims early in life. Wren managed to weather what storms he had to face in this respect, for he lived to be nearly ninety-one years of age.

From the scant evidence available it is not possible to point to much that is really tangible regarding his boyhood; by reading between the lines of what has been written, I think it is quite reasonable to picture Christopher, as a youngster, consumed by curiosity about everything he found in his father's home. One can imagine that any mischief he got into was the direct result of wanting to know how this was made, how that worked, and what would happen if he pulled something else to pieces.

If he asked questions, they were probably about the sun, the moon, and the stars; his astronomical powers, quite early in his career, were in advance of those of his contemporaries. So that, if only the bare statements in *Parentalia* are taken into account, it is evident that the little Royalist was a child of exceptional brain and character generally.

When Christopher was four Dr. Wren was appointed by Charles I to be Dean of Windsor together with the rectory of Great Haseley in Oxfordshire—an appointment that meant official residence in the deanery at Windsor and a home in the Oxfordshire rectory. The Dean spent his time between Windsor and Great Haseley for a considerable period, broken only when he acted as Chaplain to the Forces of Charles I during the Civil War.

Wallingford, on the borders of Berkshire, is the largest town in the vicinity of Great Haseley, and one imagines that the family must have spent an anxious four months during the siege of that town by the Parliamentary army, in 1646, when it is probable that the Dean's services were

required. Whether the family, including Christopher, was sent to Windsor during the siege is not quite clear, but it is, of course, more than likely.

The appointment of Dr. Wren to Windsor was in succession to his brother, Bishop Matthew Wren, who had been translated from the bishopric of Norwich to that of Ely. It looks as though Matthew Wren had held the post of Dean of Windsor in connexion with the former bishopric; but accounts do not tally. However, Bishop Matthew was a Wren of the Wrens; more about him and his indomitable courage will be heard later.

Altogether, Christopher's home was nothing if not hot Royalist; if ever the gospel of 'divine right of kings' was preached anywhere, it was at the deanery of Windsor.

The Dean made up his mind that there was only one school to which Christopher could possibly be sent—namely, to Westminster. He had no opinion of many of the public schools whose headmasters were inclined to waver in their views regarding the Royalist cause. On the whole, public schools were loyal, but the good Dean viewed with supreme disgust those that were showing signs of defection. To send Christopher to Westminster was to place him under the famous Dr. Richard Busby, and a stauncher Royalist could not have been found in London.

The only trouble was that Christopher was anything but robust as a child. Boys entered their public schools in those days at an age when we, in these, are just considering a preparatory school, and the Dean would have preferred to send Christopher to Westminster long before he actually went. However, he allowed discretion to guide his actions and engaged the Rev. William Shephard as tutor. Not much has been recorded of Shephard's powers as a teacher, but the fact that Dr. William Holder (of Bletchington, Oxfordshire) taught Christopher mathematics was of the supremest importance.

Dr. Holder seems to have been a man of many parts. If *Parentalia* is to be credited—I say this because it is obviously inaccurate in parts—he was 'fam'd for his wonderful Art in making a young Gentleman (named

Alexander Popham) who was born deaf and dumb, to speak.' He also wrote a *Discourse on the Elements of Speech* in 1669.

There is no record that may be cited as pointing to the fact that Christopher was in any way musical, but he may have learned something of the theoretical side of the art from Holder who published a *Treatise of the Natural Grounds and Principals of Harmony* in 1694, together with some sort of survey of the ancient Greek scales.

Holder was a learned astronomer, and I am inclined to think that it was he who first excited Christopher's interest in astronomy as a science. He published a *Discourse concerning Time with Application of the Natural Day, Lunar Month, and Solar Year, as Natural*.

This, admittedly, was as late as 1712, by which time Wren had distinguished himself as architect as well as an astronomer, and had completed St. Paul's Cathedral; but the fact remains that Holder *was* an astronomer, and it is quite reasonable to conclude that Christopher learned much from him concerning astronomy. If it is not so, it is difficult to say where he learned his early facts; it was hardly likely at Westminster, and at Oxford he seems already to have been more or less complete in the way of technique.

I am of opinion that Holder was responsible for much in Wren's early life, encouraging him to construct and to invent. Probably the inventions took the form of childish playthings at first; but the story of Wren's life is so amazing a record of genius which developed out of all proportion to his age that I feel there must be some way of accounting for it in these, his early years.

The question of heredity may be raised at this point. Dean Wren must indeed have been an excellent amateur architect to be employed to design a building for the Queen. At the King's request he prepared a design which was accepted; the cost was to be over thirteen thousand pounds sterling. The design, for aught I know to the contrary, has perished; the actual building never materialized owing to the disturbed state of the country. So

that Christopher Wren's career seems to have been guided by strong hereditary tendencies and uncommonly fortunate surroundings.

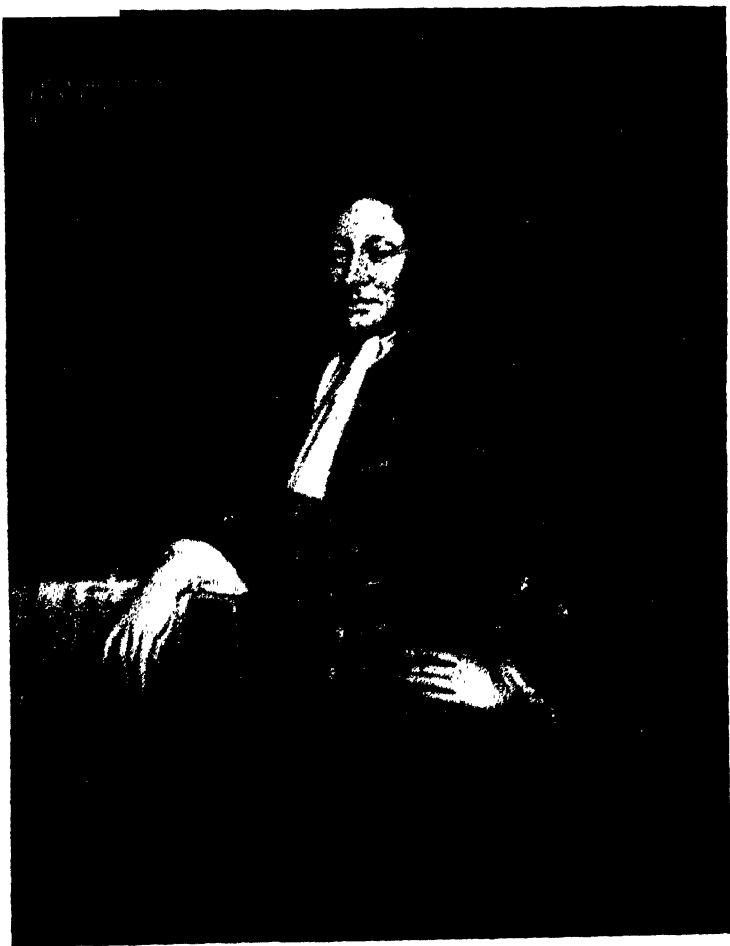
There is no mention of his having studied drawing with any master, either at home or when he went to Westminster. That is the extraordinary part about Wren; everything seems to have come easily to him. His handwriting is stated to have been a perfect work of art; his Latin was admirable. I have examined several of his letters and poems written in that language, printed in *Parentalia*, and can testify to the excellence of their construction. His conception of Latin verse clearly shows devotion to classic writers.

The days at the peaceful deanery were well spent; there was much to see and to admire in St. George's, though it is likely that Christopher stayed most of his time at Great Haseley, regarding a visit to Windsor as a great treat.

In these days children take little interest in the political situation of the day; fortunately there is rarely any reason why they should. In the days of King Charles all intelligent children held their fathers' views with might and main.

By the time Christopher was eight Charles was completing his eleventh year of ruling without Parliament, and one imagines that the small Royalist regarded the King as a kind of deity who could do no wrong. He had often seen him, as the Dean was a personal friend; so graceful and so handsome a man as the King, dressed to perfection in the most becoming clothes ever worn in England before or since, must have created a deep impression upon his mind.

Charles Louis, the Elector Palatine, was also a frequent visitor to the deanery at Windsor. He was the King's nephew. Christopher used to look forward to his visits, though he could scarcely realize their purport which was an attempt on the Elector's part to persuade his royal uncle to help him regain the Palatinate. The King, however, pointed out that he had more than enough trouble at home, with both England and Scotland in a ferment. What was the Dean's opinion of the Elector later on, when



SURVEYOR-GENERAL SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN, M.A., LL.D.
(1632-1723)

he joined the King's enemies, is not recorded but it can be imagined.

Altogether, Christopher's home was a thoroughly Royalist household. 'For God and King Charles' was its motto, and if the young gentleman had learned to add 'and death and damnation to Cromwell and all his followers,' it was but a sign of those strenuous times when political opinions (worth the holding at all) caused their owners, like the Saints of old, to have the praises of God in their mouths, but a two-edged sword in their hands.

EXPLANATION OF DOCUMENT ON OPPOSITE PAGE

(For account of the discovery of this document (by Prof. Edward Bensly) in the National Library of Wales, see *List of Acknowledgments* at the beginning of the volume.)

The first entry, dated Sep. 1623, records the Dean's marriage; it also speaks of an illness, a month later, that confined him to bed until the following February. Entries crossed out refer to children who predeceased the Dean. Summarized, they are: (1) Mary, Dec. 7, 1624. (2) Katharine, Ap. 18, 1626. (3) Susan, Nov. 7, 1627. (4) Elizabeth, Feb. 12, 1630. Died of hæmorrhage shortly after birth. (5) Christopher, undated. A baptismal record gives the year as 1631. He was 'Born, baptized, and dead in the same hour.' (6) *CHRISTOPHER, Secundus*, October 20, 1632. (7) Elizabeth, Dec. 7, 1633. Died of consumption at 16. (8) Anne, Dec. 18, 1634. (9) Rachel, July 20, 1636. Evidently delicate. (10) A son, prematurely born in 1638. (11) Frances, Ap. 20, 1643. Died Dec. 27 of the same year—'on the Feast of St John the Evangelist, the day before the Innocents.'

The Dean also preserved a letter from 'his loving friend, butt Vn-worthy God ffather, Christopher Parris,' which may possibly point to the origin of the name Christopher in the family.

On the upper part of the leaf here photographed the Dean has recorded the birth of his father, Francis Wren, in 1552 his own, on Sep. 17, 1589; also that of his wife, on Nov. 29, 1602.

The discovery of this valuable document corrects the statements made in most biographies that the Dean's wife died while Christopher was a baby. She was obviously alive in 1643, but I think she must have died before 1646, as the Dean went back to his old Rectory in that year, living with his daughter Susan, then recently married (p. 16). Christopher does not mention his mother in his letters to his father in 1647.

■

CHAPTER II
AT WESTMINSTER SCHOOL

OF all the really great headmasters of Westminster up to the days of the Stuarts Dr. Richard Busby was perhaps the greatest, though the famous William Camden cannot lightly be disregarded. He, however, belonged to the days of Elizabeth, so far as his headmastership at Westminster School was concerned; incidentally, he had the pleasure of Ben Jonson as one of his pupils.

Dr. Richard Busby, clerk in Holy Orders, had himself been a Westminster boy. As an undergraduate at Christ's, Oxford, he was noted for his hero-worship of King Charles I, whose coronation had recently taken place. By the time he was thirty-three his name was known throughout the length and breadth of England, so zealous was he for the Royalist cause; it was directly in recognition of his services to the Crown that he was appointed Rector of Cudworth in Somersetshire.

When Christopher Wren entered Westminster School Busby had been headmaster a little over a year. His appointment was viewed at the time with supreme satisfaction by all true Royalists; it was said that King Charles could count on every Westminster boy as a future soldier. Whether this was a fact or not, it is certain that Busby possessed remarkable powers as a teacher.

He ruled with a rod of iron or, perhaps more correctly, with one of cane; it was his proud boast that of the bishops who were in office under Charles II he had thrashed no less than sixteen. Whether he ever boasted that he had thrashed sixteen bishops and one architect is not recorded; let us hope not, for Christopher was still inclined to be delicate.

Busby, judging from paintings, was a grim, gaunt-looking individual with a short Stuart beard, who generally wore a monkish cowl and a black cape with a white collar and cuffs.

His influence was enormous. The boys may have feared his cane, for he thrashed and thrashed, and thrashed again ; but they appreciated his motives. He had one idea in view only : his object in life was to make a Royalist of every Westminster boy, no matter whether he had brains or not. Had his personality been less forceful he would certainly have had to submit to the school being closed in 1642, for the foundation had no independent revenues and the buildings were the property of the Dean and Chapter. As such they were in immediate danger of an ordinance of Parliament by which the properties of ecclesiastical bodies might be sequestered. Busby, however, held his own in spite of the King's enemies, and the school flourished.

He steeped the College in Latin. If you went to Westminster under Busby you were thrashed when you forgot your verbs and probably if you remembered them ; you tackled a fresh author each succeeding term, and you always worked from Busby's text and took down Busby's notes. You learnt your Greek paradigms from Busby's Greek Grammar and put away your edition of Camden ; you studied the intricacies of the accusative-and-infinitive construction from Busby's Syntax, no matter how well you could have managed with Lily's Latin Grammar.

You learnt your Hebrew from Busby's Primer and you bought your books from old Elizabeth Redmayne who published them all ; she, incidentally, published for Eton. Busby suffered from a Latin complex, apparently, for your Latin lessons (which you took every day of your life) did not begin or end in the Latin class ; you learnt your Euclid from Barrow's *Euclidis Elementa*, and your ' Pons Asinorum ' and other obscure problems *were propounded in Latin*.

You might spell your English words as you liked, more or less ; it was the custom in those days. Therefore it did not matter to you whether you went to ' Paule's ' or

'Paul's' church. As a matter of fact, you never went there at all; Westminster Abbey was good enough for you at all times. So that if you wore 'hobnayleshooes' and cared to commit the word to paper in that form, or some modification of it, nothing was said; but Heaven help you if you misspelt your Latin!

You could never have *loved* Busby, but you would indeed have been ungrateful if you did not realize that he was out to make a man—and a gentleman—of you. He was no great educational reformer; he had no ideas of bringing education up to date, but he saw to it that every boy in the school slogged and slaved at subjects calculated to bring his mind to a high level.

When Christopher Wren began to invent and do things for himself Busby encouraged him; when he dedicated one of his inventions to his father in a long and admirably-worded Latin letter the headmaster nearly smiled at him.

Mathematics, as a subject in the school curriculum, formed an important part of the work, but Busby had nothing to do with it. He may have kept the fact a dead secret, but his own account-books were full of mistakes in simple addition. He managed, however, to make a rough thousand a year out of the school and paid his assistants well, if not generously.

Music was taught at Westminster in Wren's time. The boys enjoyed a little relaxation for two hours in the week under the *Magister Choristorum*, with what success seems doubtful as the subject was eventually dropped.

Altogether, the school term was one long hard grind. One ideal, and one only, was set before each boy: he was given to understand that if he merely wanted to dream his way through school life his father had made a great mistake in sending him to Westminster, for Oxford and Cambridge had never known such brilliant men as those who went up from the school. Public men, statesmen, men of letters—nothing less than one of these would do for a scholar of Westminster, whether he actually stood for the College proper or whether he was, like Christopher Wren, a 'town boy' only.

Christopher began his career at Westminster at an unfortunate time, namely, in the second year of the Long Parliament of 1641. He was small for his age but had outgrown much of his infantile tendency to take cold and be delicate generally. He must have felt, child though he was, that politics and state affairs were matters in which every one took interest. The modern schoolboy never troubles his head about such things; Christopher Wren found his school seething with indignation at the turn events were taking in the country.

For that matter, he had learned a good deal at home long before he went to Westminster. Dean Wren had been roused to a pitch almost past endurance upon hearing of the unruly mob that had threatened Archbishop Laud with violence at Lambeth Palace. Christopher could see the Palace by looking across the Thames, and we are left to imagine Busby's orations, as the school met each morning, against the scandalous imprisonment of the Archbishop in the Tower—an event of recent occurrence.

Christopher was barely settled in his new school before civil war broke out. I have no reason to doubt that he was the object of considerable interest, and possibly honest sympathy, when the news came that his uncle, Bishop Matthew, had followed Laud to the Tower. That was bringing events a trifle closer, though it is reasonable to suppose that Christopher was not the only Westminster boy suffering from personal loss of that kind; there must have been many young Royalists whose blood was fired by the fact that their fathers were suffering for their allegiance either to the King or the Church, or both.

After nearly three centuries it is a simple matter for us to review the events of Charles's reign and to pronounce judgment upon the King's action in signing the death-warrant of the Earl of Strafford. The general view now is that by so sending his friend to the headsman's block Charles for ever stained his memory. Such a thought causes us to wonder what was the current opinion of the incident at Westminster School. Probably the actual

question of the King's action in the matter escaped attention because Strafford was very unpopular.

I mention this largely for the sake of pointing out that, in dealing with the life of one who was so noted a Royalist as Christopher Wren, it is impossible to bring modern criticism into play to any extent. Therefore, whatever my own private views, or whatever those of the reader, on this or any other matter connected with the history of those times, I can only *here* see everything through Royalist glasses; it naturally follows that those glasses are rose-tinted immediately the King's sacred name is mentioned, and that they become a dull, drab grey at the name of Cromwell.

Wren lived through the reigns of six monarchs and personally served five of them. He knew Charles I because his father was friendly with him; he endured life under Cromwell much as all other Royalists endured it; but he knew personally and served Charles II, James II, William III, Anne, and George I.

These were anxious days for the King's Scholars of Westminster; nearly every boy could say that a relative was being persecuted in some fashion. Christopher no doubt felt it keenly that his uncle, Bishop of Ely, enjoyed only four months of liberty during his school-days, and probably took his share with the others in defending the Abbey from the Apprentices' attack, the following year, with bitter feelings. There was some quite fierce fighting, and the Westminster boys (together with the choristers and lay-clerks) acquitted themselves admirably; as a result the Roundheads were driven back.

We can imagine Richard Busby's fury at the Puritanism displayed in the order that 'the Colleges of Westminster, Eton, and Winchester be added and comprehended within the order of February 17, concerning the imposing upon young scholars the wearing of surplices.' The order was worded thus: 'That the statute made in the University of Cambridge which imposeth the wearing of Surplices upon all graduates and students under several pains, and reinforced by the law of 1603, ought not to be pressed or imposed

upon any Student or Graduate, it being against Law and Liberty of the Subject.' I imagine that Westminster, at all events—whatever may have been done about Eton or Winchester—still continued to wear surplises as of yore.

Matters were becoming serious for the Royalists all round, and Dean Wren had feared an attack on his house for some time. As Dean of Windsor he was Registrar of the Order of the Garter, and therein lay considerable danger as Parliament was making a dead set against pageantry of any kind. The Dean took every possible precaution, even going so far as to bury the 'Diamond George and Garter of Gustavus Adolphus.' During the month of October 1642 he was visited by a man named Fogg who stated that he had in his possession a warrant from the King by authority of which he demanded the keys of the Treasury, threatening that if the Dean refused to hand them over he would 'pull the Chapel about their ears.'

The Dean naturally refused, and Fogg forced the door with iron bars, carrying off anything of value he could find. The deanery was ransacked, and Dr. Wren lost books and scripts he valued; also a good deal of plate. The latter included two silver tankards given him by the Elector Palatine on one of his visits. The altar plate was stolen from the Chapel, and the Registry of the Garter forced open and plundered. It was only by the payment of a large sum that Dean Wren regained his valuables.

Susan Wren, one of Christopher's elder sisters, at this time married Holder, who has been already mentioned. He was now Sub-Dean of the Chapel Royal in addition to being Rector of Bletchington in Oxfordshire; it was a union, no doubt, wholly acceptable to Christopher himself.

John Aubrey, an antiquary and a member of the Royal Society who knew the Wren family fairly well, recounts a story about Susan Wren worth repeating, though whether it is to be believed is another matter. I give his words:

'Amongst many other gifts she has a strange sagacity as to curing of wounds which she does not doe so much by precedent and receipt bookes as by her own excogitancy

considering the causes, effects, and circumstances. On one occasion King Charles II had hurt his hand, and the surgeon could do nothing for his relief. Then some one told the King what a rare Shee-surgeon he had in his house ; she was presently sent for at 11 o'clock at night ; she made ready a pultisse, and applyed it, and gave his Majestie sudden ease and he slept well.' Her 'pultisse' was evidently successful in curing the trouble, 'to the great grief of all the surgeons who envie and hate her.'

It is strange that Aubrey should have thought it worth while to commit this to paper ; it is stranger still (if true) that the King's doctors were so incompetent. In any case, it is doubtful if Aubrey is to be relied on ; for Anthony à Wood, another antiquary, describes him as a 'shiftless person, roving and magotie-headed, and sometimes a little better than crased. And being exceedingly credulous, would stuff his many letters with follies and misinformations, which sometimes would guide him into the paths of error.' On the other hand, Susan Wren may have been a skilled 'shee-surgeon,' as Aubrey says ; if her gifts were as diverse and varied as those of her young brother she may have been capable of a good deal. Shortly after her marriage to Holder she accompanied her husband and the Dean to the Royalist camp at Bristol, where the sad news reached them that the Archbishop had been executed on Tower Hill.¹

To Christopher, ever a lover of beautiful things, the order that all crucifixes, images, and ecclesiastical ornaments generally were to be taken out of the churches and chapels must have been a rude shock ; that he would hear about it at school is perfectly certain. The worthy headmaster was well abreast of the times, and his interpretations of the daily happenings were the breath of life in the College.

¹ January 10, 1645. According to the list of Archbishops given in Crockford there was now no Primate until the Restoration, when Juxon was translated from the Bishopric of London. His successor was Sheldon, of whom much will be heard later. Sheldon was followed by Dean Sancroft, Dean of St. Paul's and one of Wren's closest friends.

Of Christopher's personal successes at Westminster there is very little to relate; beyond his having invented an astronomical instrument of some kind nothing is recorded. On the other hand, there is no possible doubt that he displayed great ability; he certainly learned to write excellent Latin.

In 1645 his father suffered again at the hands of the insurgents; his house was sacked and he was deprived of the living of Great Haseley. In 1646 Christopher left Westminster, at the age of fourteen, after which there was an interval of three years, chiefly spent in London, before he went up to Oxford. The Dean, during this period, suffered acutely. The hiding-place of the jewels was discovered and the gems were taken; Dr. Wren also experienced considerable persecution at East Knoyle.

A certain John Niffen, whoever he may have been, on July 22, 1646, made the following deposition: 'that Dean Wren did cause to be made in frette work suspicious pictures in the Chancell, amongst the rest the picture of Christ ascending in a longe robe.' Also, apparently, 'a picture of Christ upon the Cross and a Crucifix.' The following year 'Robert Brookway, of Quinton in Dorset, Plaisterer, sworn, saith "that . . . Dean Wren . . . set up in the Chancell at Knoyle, in frett work, the picture of the 4 Evangelists."' This Robert Brookway also stated that 'the said Doctor Wren came every day himself to view the worke and to give his directions in itt.'

Verily a sign of those difficult times! The Dean must have had some influence, because the Committee of the Lords and Commons sent an appeal to the Wiltshire Committee on his behalf. The wording of it is interesting. 'It appeareth that Dr. Christopher Wren hath been much employed by this Parliament and hath suffered many violences and plunderings in the performance of these employments. And likewise he hath contributed very large sums to the service of ye state, and being a paynefull labourer in ye work of ye Ministry about these thirty years, all of which doe justly induce us to believe that he is a Person farr from meriting the Doom of Sequestracioun.'

The appeal failed, for the Dean was deprived of the benefice of East Knoyle, and a dissenting minister, named William Clifford, was appointed in his stead. He retained the use of the Rectory, however, and when the Royalist camp at Bristol broke up, he and the Holders went to live there.

Christopher was now in London. One supposes that the Dean did not see the force of bringing him into contact with those who were evidently making his own life a misery. It is also likely that he had removed him from Westminster early on account of his health which was still none too robust; even so, I have a thought that Christopher had gone through the school and that his father came to the conclusion that two or three years in London, in company with the right type of men, would be of immense value to him before going up to Oxford.

At all events, he introduced him to a brilliant young doctor—Sir Charles Scarborough, the King's physician. Scarborough was as much a mathematician as a medico and had spent some time at Cambridge with Seth Ward, later Bishop of Salisbury and also one of Wren's predecessors in the Savillian Chair of Astronomy at Oxford.

Ward and Scarborough became absorbed in mathematics of a very advanced type, taking William Oughtred's *Clavis Mathematica* as one of their models for study. Becoming somewhat distressed at their inability to understand a passage in the book, they sought out its author with whom they became friendly. Oughtred is well worthy of mention, not alone as Christopher's friend and guide but because it was he who introduced the sign \times for multiplication.

At this time Scarborough was thirty-one years of age, Ward just thirty, and Oughtred seventy-two. Christopher was not yet *fifteen*, but he was treated by all three as though he had been at least the age of Scarborough and Ward. This is evident from a letter he wrote to his father in 1647, of which I give excerpts. He speaks of Sir Charles Scarborough as being 'most kind' to him, and as lending 'a patient Ear to my Opinions and often defers to my poor Reasonings.'

Christopher invented a 'weather clock' with a revolving cylinder 'by means of which a record can be kept through the night,' and Scarborough evidently thought so much of it that 'he asked me but yesterday to have (it) constructed in Brass at his Expense.'

Christopher then wrote a treatise on trigonometry which purported to sum up 'in a few brief rules' the whole theory of Spherical Trigonometry. He scribed an epitome of this on a brass disc 'about the size of one of King James's Gold Pieces,' and Scarborough insisted that Wren should scribe one for him also. Oughtred had written 'in the vulgar tongue' an essay on Geometrical Dialling which he asked Scarborough to render into Latin, 'but he, with weightier Business in Hand, appointed me to the task which I have just completed.'

I have given these particulars in order to make it clear that Wren was accepted at his true worth, his scholarship being exceptional even for a King's Scholar of Westminster in those days. In short, and in 'the vulgar tongue' of our own time, this little group were what we call 'thoroughly highbrow'; their love of learning amounted to an obsession.

The following year Wren met Dr. John Wilkins who had either just been made, or who was about to be made Warden of Wadham College, Oxford. He was thirty-four. Strangely enough, he was not a Royalist but a staunch supporter of Cromwell. Had he been a loyalist he would certainly never have been appointed to Wadham; such appointments were being carefully watched. He had been, for some time past, chaplain to the Elector Palatine who, it will be remembered, was once a frequent visitor at Windsor Deanery. Since those days the Elector had joined the King's enemies, but Christopher seems to have decided to ignore the fact, for he was pleased enough to see his old friend. Politics was probably a barred subject, science being considered a safer and more interesting topic of conversation.

Lastly, there was Robert Boyle, then just twenty-one. It was this little group of young people, steeped in scientific

research, who were the beginners of what eventually became the Royal Society—a name applied to it first by John Evelyn, the noted diarist from whose writings much will be quoted later.

As for Christopher himself, beyond a natural anxiety for the welfare of his father, these three years were a whirl of intellectual excitement. He wrote to the Dean in glowing terms of his happiness at being in such delightful company, concluding his letter by saying 'I have nothing left to wish for unless it be that you may long be spared to bless your Devoted Son.'

Wilkins must have been exceedingly lovable ; I cannot otherwise imagine John Evelyn speaking of 'his deare and excellent friend,' for Evelyn hated Cromwell with a deadly hatred and generally refused to meet any of his supporters. At all events, what political differences existed between the members of the society, one day to be called Royal, did not affect the main issue—their earnest search after knowledge and truth.

It is at this stage in his career that I feel inclined to point to Wren as a genius, and to repeat my suggestion that his genius was the type that might have made anything of him. There is as yet no question of his becoming an architect ; he seems to have been leading a life of an independent gentleman, in a sense, though not merely by amusing himself for a space before being sent up to the University.

Times were bad all round for the Royalists and, as far as any of them could see, would continue to be bad, possibly worse. Yet Dean Wren, undoubtedly a man of means (or at least drawing a substantial income), evidently felt that Christopher would 'make good' in some way. Sir Charles Scarborough obviously thought the same.

Westminster School continued to produce its scholars and Royalists—certainly one or the other, usually both. Busby had no interest in any boy who had not enough grit in him to follow a public career. Public careers, in those days, needed a man's courage to follow unless one happened to be of the temperament of the Vicar of Bray.

Where Wren's genius is so amazing is that he turned out to be a scholar by virtue of scholastic training and an engineer by nature. So far as I am aware, he never had a lesson in drawing in his life. On the other hand, he was never a marvellous draughtsman even though he ultimately proved to be a great designer. Still, it is little short of miraculous that his powers should have developed at the age of fifteen to such a degree that he could not only interest Scarborough and Boyle, to say nothing of a man of Oughtred's years, but could discuss abstruse problems in so erudite a fashion as to compel them to listen to him.

Yet there is no suggestion of his being anything approaching a prig; as we proceed in the story of his life it will become increasingly apparent that Wren's nature was exceedingly lovable, and that his temperament was sunny and cheerful.

Borrowing on knowledge of what is yet to come, I am inclined here to point to his complete lack of conceit. When the reader has examined such quotations from his letters as I shall put before him later, he will be of the same opinion. It is not my inclination to write biographically of a man in whom I can see no wrong, any more than it is to suggest his life's work to be flawless.

The fact remains that Wren is now remembered entirely as an architect, St. Paul's for ever being his monument; what is not realized is that he had no apparent leanings towards architecture until circumstance made it necessary that he should have.

At this point we find him an attractive youth with a knowledge far beyond his years, consorting with men who were undoubted thinkers in that thinking age. We shall find him continuing to consort with such men until we see him leader of them all, a man to whom every one seemed to turn for advice and counsel.

Yet he never made the youthful (and perhaps quite pardonable) mistake of suggesting that he had forgotten as much of a subject as others had ever contrived to learn; in the presence of his elders he was respectful almost to a degree of subservience.

After translating a work of Oughtred's into Latin, then the universal language for tomes and treatises, he wrote to the old professor, concluding his letter with these words :

' I am only fearful lest, owing to Ignorance of mine, one Point of Learning should be lost, Learning to be the humblest Seeker after which I consider my proudest boast, only asking of you (if even this be not more than I deserve) that you include amongst your most devoted Admirers,

' CHRISTOPHER WREN.'

It must have been about this time that the news leaked through that King Charles had been arrested, an event that clouded the horizon so far as the Royalists were concerned. Then followed his temporary escape to Carisbrooke Castle in the Isle of Wight. It chanced to be November 11, a date of peace to us in 1918 but hardly so to them in 1647. Charles made his greatest mistake on the day after Christmas when he signed the secret treaty with Scotland whereby the Scots were to invade England and guarantee his safety.

Wren and his friends could have known nothing of this, but they must have entertained great fears for the continued safety of the King. Wren was still in London a year after when, two days before Christmas, the Rump Parliament voted for Charles's trial.

The court met on January 20, 1649, and the King was arraigned as an implacable enemy to the commonwealth of England. He heard his sentence on the 27th. He requested that he might be heard before the Lords and Commons, but the request was refused.

His followers were dismayed ; his enemies, even, were apprehensive of the step they had taken. In the end, his superb dignity and calm courage was such that it was attributed to supernatural causes. He stepped through Inigo Jones's middle window of the Banqueting House in Whitehall, on to the scaffold erected in front of it, with his customary grace of movement ; perhaps nothing better became Charles in his life than his leaving it.

Was Wren there? Granted that a large part of the crowd had assembled out of morbid curiosity, many a Royalist

attended in the sense of attending a friend's funeral. Wren may have been present out of respect for his father's friend ; it is possible that the Dean also stood witness to the fact that King Charles died for the sake of the Church of England, even if he could not bring himself to believe that he died because he did not *understand* England.

The death of King Charles I closed an epoch in our history ; it so chanced that it closed one in the life of Christopher Wren, who now entered a new sphere of activity. The three years he had spent in London had by no means been ill-spent, but the time had arrived when he was to make a definite move towards choosing for himself a career that should befit a King's Scholar of Westminster.

The cry had gone up ' The King is Dead,' but there were no answering voices that dared to raise the still mightier ' Long Live the King.'

CHAPTER III

AT OXFORD

NORMALLY, Wren should have gone to Christ Church from Westminster School, or perhaps to Trinity, Cambridge; either would have been the usual course for a King's Scholar of Westminster in those days, especially for one as brilliant as he. Those three years in London, however, had seen life-long friendships formed, that of the Warden of Wadham being by no means the least important.

Wren must indeed have been fond of Dr. Wilkins because there is no doubt that he went to Wadham for the purpose of being under him; I think also that Evelyn's influence must have had something to do with the decision. It is quite likely that he and Wren talked the matter over and, being of common opinion that Wilkins was a man in a thousand, decided that Wadham was the college for Wren.

Evelyn was Wren's senior by twelve years and had himself been a fellow-commoner of Balliol. He left Oxford without taking a degree, as a matter of fact, but his brilliant scholarship was recognized and valued by all who knew him.

The conversation I have suggested as possibly having taken place between him and Wren I assign to the year 1649, in face of the fact that *Parentalia* distinctly states that Wren went to Wadham in 1646, in the fourteenth year of his age. *Parentalia*, though valuable to any one researching in the matter of the life of Wren, is so unreliable in certain of its statements that I am inclined to be suspicious of any I cannot prove without its help.

This is the statement in *Parentalia* :

'In the Year 1646, and Fourteenth of his Age, Mr. Wren was admitted a Gentleman-Commoner at Wadham College, in the University of Oxford.'

Apart from the proof already given of his having been in London for at least three years, this is obviously inaccurate on the face of it, for the register at Wadham records that Wren's caution-money was paid on June 25, 1649. The year 1650 has been given by a number of historians as the year of his admission to Wadham, but I am inclined to reject it as being too late, for I find that he took his B.A. in 1651.

My admiration for Wren's intellect is such that I can imagine him taking *any* degree in a twelvemonth were it not for the fact that the laws of Oxford University would have prevented him. In any case 1646 is wrong, for it is unthinkable that a man of Wren's stamp could take *five* years to obtain his B.A. degree. I find that he proceeded to M.A. in 1653.

In John Evelyn Wren found a man of admirable character and also possessed of a certain amount of wealth. He had been travelling in Europe for some years, with Paris as his headquarters. He had, however, been resident in London now for two years during which time he and Wren had seen a good deal of each other.

As will be shown later, Wren and Evelyn were not dissimilar in character; neither could bear to be idle for an hour. Wren, when irritated because his designs for St. Paul's were criticized and fussed over, went off to Oxford and occupied himself with astronomical pursuits until the 'powers that were' should come to their senses.

After the execution of Charles, when there was not much of interest for a Royalist, Evelyn temporarily retired, and amused himself by planning an amazingly beautiful garden at his home, Sayes Court, Deptford. If he could have hibernated in some form or other until the Restoration of Charles II, he would certainly have done so. All of which pays a very high compliment indeed to the integrity and personality of the Warden of Wadham who must have had to tread somewhat warily, considering that his predecessor, Dr. Pitt, had been removed for 'high contempt and denial of the authoritie of Parliament.' Furthermore, the students and scholars were required, 'as they would answer to the

contrary at their peril,' to receive Dr. Wilkins as the Parliamentary nominee.

One imagines that Wren was fully aware of all this long before he actually went up to Oxford, and that he shared Aubrey's view of the Warden—that while he might be 'no great-read man, but one of much and deepe thinking,' he was certainly 'a prudent man as well as geniose.'

Possibly Wren went up hoping for the best, but viewing with some concern the fact that recent appointments on the University professorial staff were Parliamentary in character; at all events, he had the satisfaction of knowing that, with regard to Wilkins, 'all the Cavaliers gladly placed their sons under the care of one who strove to be tolerant.'

Looking at Wren's University career as a whole, and with very scanty information to go upon, I cannot decide whether he worked chiefly for his degree and spent his spare time inventing, or whether he devoted himself to his inventions and took his degree in his spare time; I imagine it must have been the latter, for Wilkins organized little exhibitions of Wren's models almost weekly.

The list of these inventions, as given in *Parentalia*, is a long one—too long to quote here in its entirety. There seems to have been a number of 'New Theories' amongst them, as diverse in character as the inventions themselves. I give a few, here and there, that have caught my eye, taken from the '*Catalogue of New Theories, Inventions, and Experiments*, exhibited by Mr. Wren at the first assemblies at Wadham College, Oxford, for advancement and Experimental Knowledge, called then the New Philosophy, with other useful Discoveries, communicated to the Royal Society.'

There was, first of all, the weather-clock; whether this was the same instrument he invented in London, or an improvement upon it, is not clear. There was also a 'Ballance—to Weigh without Weights,' and 'Several new ways of Graving and Etching.'

The next of interest on the list is a contrivance whereby it became possible to 'weave many Ribbons at

once without Turning a Wheel,' and also 'divers new Engines for raising of Water.' This latter invention, I imagine, came in useful later on, during the excavations at St. Paul's.

I was quite surprised to see in the list that Wren invented 'Divers Musical Instruments.' It is not usual, unless one is really musical, to go far in a matter of that kind; I can only trust that none of them bore any resemblance to the modern saxophone.

The 'New Theories' included a 'Hypothesis of the Moon's Libration,' which is more what one would expect from him. On the other hand, I should like to have studied his work on 'How to Stay Long under Water.' A further effort was 'To measure the Bass and Height of a Mountain only by journeying over it.'

There are many others less interesting, perhaps, but which tend to remind us that people in those days had to go without much we have in these.

Wren naturally met some men of distinction at Oxford, one of the most noted being Thomas Willis, senior to Wren by eleven years. Willis was at Christ Church, where he took the degree of M.B. before Wren went up. After the Restoration Willis became a famous physician, being elected Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in 1664, having already been made Sedleian Professor of Natural Philosophy in 1660.

Willis interested Wren enormously on account of his powers of research; incidentally, I find that he, also, was a perfect Latinist. I imagine that Wren must have often been in his rooms in Canterbury Quad when the forbidden Liturgy was read—as it was, daily. Wren never lost sight of Willis whom he continued to meet at the Royal Society gatherings.

Another interesting friend was Thomas Sprat who eventually became Dean of Westminster, one of the few priests to read the Declaration of Indulgence for James II. Later, he directed the restorations which Wren carried out at Westminster Abbey.

Whether Wren read Sprat's poem, dated 1659 and entitled *To the Happie Memorie of the most Renowned Prince*

Oliver, with anything but disgust is another matter. On the other hand, Sprat wrote an excellent history of the Royal Society (which he helped to found), and Wren may have read this with better feelings.

Whatever were the actual facts of the case, I find that the available information points only one way—to Wren's amiability and broadmindedness. It is, however, only fair to Sprat to quote from his history; speaking of the members of the Royal Society, he says that their 'first purpose was no more than only the Satisfaction of breathing free air and of conversing in quiet with one another without being engaged in the Passions and Madness of that dismal Age.'

At this time Robert Boyle was deep in chemical and physical research work, and it is likely that he and Wren discussed the matter of the part air plays in the propagation of sound, for there was little enough in the scientific world that did not interest Wren, and Boyle was particularly keen on acoustical problems. Boyle's famous law concerning the volume of gases under certain conditions was not then thought out, but Wren and he spent hours together experimenting with a compressed-air pump.

Boyle might have been Provost of Eton in 1665 but for the fact that he would not take Holy Orders, even though he devoted much of his time to the study of theology.

Church life in 1652 was a very different matter from Church life in 1665, as all true Churchmen could testify. In 1665 Pepys could make notes in his diary of having heard a 'brave anthem by Dr. Cooke,' or of having watched King Charles II 'keep time with his hand all along the anthem.' On the other hand, Evelyn records that on Christmas Day, both in 1652 and 1653, no churches were allowed to open. On Ash Wednesday in the latter year, according to his diary, 'in contradiction to all custom and decency, the Usurper Cromwell feasted at the Lord Mayor's, riding in triumph through the City.'

The observance of all Church festivals was strictly forbidden, the condition of England being then only a degree better than that of Russia at the present time.

Evelyn and his family were church-goers and strict sabbatarians; they made their Easter Communion, despite Cromwell, but it had to be in the privacy of their own home. The fines extorted from those proved (or even suspected) to be recusant were severe; if Churchmen sought to carry out Divine commands by Eucharistic observances they realized that, until times should be better, religious toleration was only likely to be extended to the Cromwellian established Church. There was certainly none extended towards what had once been the Church of England.

It is the custom of most historians in these days to suggest that Cromwell himself was tolerant to a pronounced degree. His oft-quoted declaration that 'I had rather that Mohammedanism were permitted amongst us than that one of God's children should be persecuted' makes insincere reading. Cromwell was never tolerant of anything that did not conform to his own ideas.

Neither can I be persuaded that he was in any sense religious. He appeared to be tolerant towards both Jews and Quakers, but such toleration was mere mental inactivity; he was too lazy in the spiritual sense to trouble himself about them. There was no need for him to do so; they were not his enemies. Cromwell's enemies were the Royalists. Like all reformers of his own period (or of any other, before or since) he lost all sense of balance. It was not enough to advance the cause—the just cause—of Presbyterianism and other types of Nonconformity; it must be to the complete extinction of the Church.

Religious disturbances have always assumed the characteristics of meanness. Rarely has there been a religious reformer at any time in our history who has not been a hypocrite; Cromwell was one of the most noteworthy.

There was a great difference between the outlook of Charles I and that of Cromwell. Probably both views were mistaken, but one was sincere, the other a mere pretence at being sincere. Charles honestly believed in the divinity of kings; he therefore excused his worst policies by pointing out that, as others could not agree with him and were likely to oppose him, his personal safety was at stake.

Personal safety of one divinely appointed had to be guaranteed at all costs, no matter how it might affect others.

Such a way of thought is not tolerable to us, and no monarch in these times would dare to hold such views; in Charles's time it was different. *He believed in his own divinity*; thousands of his loyal subjects believed in it. It was a sincere, though mistaken attitude.

Cromwell believed in the divinity of nobody; perhaps he was right. Historians who have sought to present him in a favourable light have never tired of making the most of his refusal of the Crown. 'He could have been King had he wished,' they have said. It would be a deal more honest to say that he *would* have been King had he *dared*.

That was John Evelyn's view, at all events. I am not in the least disposed to doubt that it was the real view of the good Dr. Wilkins. He owed his position at Wadham to Cromwell, but he secretly despised the Lord Protector for his lack of protection of the churches. Wilkins preached tolerance in every form; he cannot have regarded Cromwell in any light other than the true. There can have been no tolerance—indeed nothing less than rank hypocrisy—in the man who quoted Almighty God in every sentence he uttered, but who did nothing to prevent his soldiers converting St. Paul's Cathedral into a stable.

In every life of Cromwell I have read—in every account of him at all—I have been told to believe that he was the embodiment of piety. My reply is that I do not believe it—not one word of it; the whole history of the age disproves it. Had he believed in his own divinity he could be forgiven on the same grounds as one is bound to forgive Charles I, even if one has to apply the term fanatic; there was little fanaticism about Cromwell. He was merely spiritually dishonest.

In taking so strong a view, and in face of what has been the view of other historians, I am fully conscious that I am thinking of Wren and Evelyn; indeed I am thinking of the position of all Royalists in their time. Furthermore, it is my intention to write closely to the Stuart side, simply because Royalist influences were the chief influences in Wren's life.

It is all the more interesting to me to find Wren, in 1653, constantly in company with the Warden of Wadham. Evelyn visited Oxford in the summer of that year, and if we, in our imagination, accompany him on that visit we shall not be long before calling upon Dr. Wilkins. Evelyn records in his diary that he 'visited that miracle of a youth, Mr. Christopher Wren,' and we shall find that the Warden has much to show us.

We shall share Evelyn's admiration of the 'transparent apiaries which he (Wilkins) had built like castles and palaces and so order'd them one upon the other as to take the honey without destroying the bees.'

We shall be shown a 'variety of shadows of all perspectives.' This is probably Wren's work. There is also a Way-wiser, which seems to be a very charming name for a guide-book, probably with map complete. Other objects of interest are a thermometer, and a 'monstrous magnet.' These, says Evelyn, were the inventions of Wilkins and of 'that prodigious young Scholar, Mr. Christopher Wren, who presented me with a piece of white marble he had stain'd with a lively red, very deepe, as beautiful as if it had been natural.'

Wren was very attached to Wadham College. In spite of the fact that he had been created a Fellow of All Souls, he remained very faithful to his old associations. As late as 1663 he was still paying rent for a room over Wadham gateway which had once been part of the Warden's lodging. He also designed and presented a clock to the college, the mechanism of which is still preserved in the chapel.

Wren's University career seems largely to have been devoted to science, and I think it reasonable to suppose that he would have been regarded as an undergraduate with adequate financial resources at his disposal. That he consorted with the most distinguished men in Oxford at the time is an historical fact; that he took his degree as a matter of course seems equally well substantiated. It might be added that he accepted his Fellowship much in the same way.

Whether he was contemplating anything definite in

the way of a career is not easy to determine. It would seem that he was so engaged in searching after knowledge that he was more or less content to let the future take care of itself. He never seems, at any time in his life, to have sought an appointment or to have expressed a desire to do a particular piece of work. Unless I am mistaken in my estimate of his character, he was always ready to accede to any request put before him, to build anything he was asked to build, and, for the rest, to occupy himself in some intellectual pursuit.

Religion and politics seem to have been entirely barred from his conversation at this period; I imagine that he reserved such matters for the vacations, when he probably visited his father at East Knoyle or Windsor. It is difficult to say with any certainty where the Dean was; he moved about a good deal, and it is to be feared that his life was anything but a bed of roses.

In 1656, however, the Dean died in Holder's house at Bletchington. His father's death must have been a great sorrow to Christopher; there is no actual record of any expression on his part, but letters, written at various times to the Dean, prove beyond a doubt that there was a great bond of friendship between father and son.

The Dean's death was untimely in that he was not spared to witness the return of Charles II. There were yet two years till the death of Cromwell, and then a still further attempt to carry on the Protectorate by the succession of his son Richard, who proved to possess none of his father's strength though he may be said to have been in a degree virtuous.

So that Dean Wren did not live to enjoy the peace of 1660, nor even to see his son begin an amazing career in which honours were to be showered upon him out of all proportion to his years; but he must have had the satisfaction of knowing that he had made wise decisions concerning Christopher's welfare, and that he need have no fears regarding the young scientist's future.

CHAPTER IV
GRESHAM PROFESSOR

OXFORD had thoroughly captivated Wren. Everything and everybody around him had been to his liking. It is a little difficult to say with absolute certainty that his financial position was such that he need not actually earn his own living, but it is not without the confines of reason to suppose that he was able to do much as he liked.

His Fellowship at All Souls pleased him enormously ; the quiet life of thought and study he no doubt promised himself was one eminently suited to his studious nature.

I imagine, therefore, that he regarded an offer from Gresham College for him to take the Chair of Astronomy as being something he would rather had not happened just then. Laurence Rooke had given up the Professorship in order to take the Chair of Geometry, and the move on his part was the primary cause of Wren's being offered the vacancy. This was in 1657.

Wren acted on his first impulses. He was too young and inexperienced ; he was in the midst of so much that interested him at All Souls and in Oxford generally. No ; he thought he would prefer to remain where he was.

His friends, on the other hand, held a different opinion, Wilkins especially. It was an honour ; besides which, there was no one more fitted for the position. Evidently they had a friendly tussle with him over it, but they prevailed in the end and he accepted the Professorship at twenty-four years of age. Truly a tribute to his brilliant scholarship.

It was the custom to deliver one's inaugural address in Latin at Gresham College, a small matter not likely to worry Wren to any extent. Of the College itself he must

have thought highly ; at least, he would have been exceptional in his views otherwise. For sixty years lectures had been delivered in the charming old house in Bishopsgate Street that had once belonged to Sir Thomas Gresham, the London merchant who had founded the Royal Exchange. Each day in the week was devoted to the study of one of the seven subjects directed by Gresham—astronomy, geometry, divinity, law, physic, music, and rhetoric. Wren never delivered his lectures in any other building than the original, but in 1768 the house was made over to the Crown, and a room in the Royal Exchange used instead. The present building dates from 1843.

Wren's inaugural address appears in full in *Parentalia* and is couched in high-flown terms. He speaks charmingly of his 'Juvenile Blushes' and of 'my Bashful Years' before an assembly composed of some of the most scholarly men of what he describes as 'no barren Age.'

He must have had the supreme satisfaction of realizing, as he gazed round the assembly, that politics and religion were forming no barriers against free discussion on other and less hackneyed topics. Had he lived in these times no such thought need have assailed him, for it is comparatively rare that either religion or politics count for much when there is anything else of a more absorbing nature in the air. In Wren's days it was possible to make a shrewd guess at a man's religion, and certainly at his politics, by the very way in which he dressed. Moreover, such things were matters of immediate concern.

'Astronomy,' Wren told them, 'hath enlarged both our Understanding and Habitation ; hath given Politeness and consequently Religion to the barbarous World.' He then picturesquely described astronomy as having 'guided the creeping Ships of the Ancients whenever they would venture to leave the Land to find a neighbour Shore.'

He concluded his speech with a perfectly delightful picture of the patronage afforded to London by the seven planets ; when reading it I fell to thinking of Gustav Holst's orchestral fantasies of that name, and almost to wishing the two men had met. 'Lastly,' said Wren, 'the

Moon, the Lady of the Waters, seems amorously to court this Place.'

There is no account of the reception accorded him as he resumed his seat, but the oration must have taken the assembly by storm. Cavalier or Roundhead, Loyalist or Parliamentarian—surely none could have failed to be impressed with the poetical eloquence and subtle imagination of the young Professor.

About this time Dr. Wilkins, who had recently married a sister of Cromwell, preached a notable sermon before the Lord Mayor at St. Paul's, taking as his text 'We are glad when we are weak and ye are strong,' and dealing with its sentiment in such a tolerant and broadminded fashion as to awaken the admiration of John Evelyn. 'Wilkins,' said Evelyn, 'took great pains to preserve the Universities from the ignorant sacrilegious Commanders and Souldiers who would fain have demolished all places and persons that pretended to Learning.'

Wilkins, however, was one of very few Cromwellians who preached anything in the nature of tolerance, as well the Churchmen knew.

Wren himself came into contact with Cromwell at this time. The Protector's two daughters, Lady Falconbridge and Mrs. Claypole, were both ardent Churchwomen; Mrs. Claypole, in particular, strongly disapproved of her father's persecution of the Church. Cromwell was an ill-mannered beast at the best, but he generally made himself moderately amiable to his favourite daughter, whatever he may have been to her husband, Richard Claypole, Master of the Horse.

The Claypoles were very fond of Wren and frequently invited him to their house. One night he was dining there when dinner was interrupted by the arrival of Cromwell in a distinctly unpleasant mood. He marched into the dining-room and sat down without so much as a word of greeting to those present.

After a while he chanced to look up and recognized Wren. 'Your Uncle has been long in the Tower,' he said, as though Wren had been responsible for the fact. 'He

has, Sir,' said Wren, probably a little astonished that Cromwell should have mentioned such a matter at his daughter's dinner-table. Then he added: 'He bears his affliction with great patience and resignation.'

Cromwell went on with his dinner. Then he said, abruptly, 'He may come out an he will.' Whether Wren knew that his uncle had already been offered his freedom seems doubtful, for he said, quite eagerly, 'Will your Highness permit me to take him this from your mouth?' 'You may,' said Cromwell.

Wren rose from the table, begged his host and hostess to excuse him, and went straight to the Tower.

We can imagine his excitement as he entered the Bishop's cell, but it strains our imagination to visualize the scene upon hearing the good prelate's reply.

'This is not the first time I have received like information from that miscreant,' he said scornfully. 'I disdained the terms for my enlargement, which were to be a mean acknowledgment of his favour and an abject submission to his detestable tyranny.'

Christopher, being a Wren, appreciated the old man's point of view, but on looking round the Bishop's cell must surely have urged his uncle to consider the blessedness of liberty.

Nothing, however, would shake the Bishop. 'No,' said he. 'I am determined to tarry the Lord's leisure and to owe my deliverance, which I trust is not far off, to *Him alone*.' Beyond that he would not go.

The Wrens were made of the right stuff; Christopher might well have known that it would take more than the hated Lord Protector of England to cause the Bishop of Ely to bow his head and bend his knee. There is no further record, as a matter of fact, of what passed between nephew and uncle, but we can imagine the white-haired old man drawing himself up to his full height and saying 'You can tell *that* to Oliver Cromwell; *no Wren ever serves him!*'

Mrs. Claypole's lingering illness and painful death must have been a matter of sorrow to Wren, who continued his friendship with her husband. It is said that the loss of his

daughter profoundly affected the Protector and hastened his own end. His death, in 1658, certainly 'made matters worse rather than better in the country generally; in London particularly, for riots broke out in various districts and soldiers took possession of Gresham College, ordering the professors to disband. Wren went straight to Oxford, where he received a letter from his friend Dr. Sprat, full of wrath at the deplorably unpleasant condition of the building. 'This day,' he wrote, 'I went to visit Gresham College but found the Place in such nasty Condition, so defiled, and the Smells so infernal that, if you should come to make use of your Tube (by which he means Wren's telescope) it would be like Dives looking out of Hell into Heaven. Dr. Goddard, of all your colleagues, keeps possession, which he could never be able to do had he not before prepared his Nose for Camp-perfumes by his Voyage into Scotland.'

Dr. Jonathan Goddard was the Gresham Professor of Physic. He had served in the Army as chief physician to Cromwell both in Scotland and in Ireland. The Professor of Divinity, Dr. Horton, was also prevented from giving his lectures by the soldiers.

Christopher's cousin, Matthew Wren, wrote saying that he, also, had gone to Gresham College, but that 'at the gate I was stopped by a man with a Gun who told me that there was no Admittance on Account of the College being reformed into a Garrison. Then, changing my Pretension, I scarce got permission to go in to Dr. Goddard, who gave me Assurance enough that none of your Colleagues intend to appear this term, unless the soldiers be removed, of which there is no Probability.'

Wren, however, did not trouble himself further about his Gresham lectures; once in his beloved Oxford he found plenty to interest him. News then came of Bishop Matthew's release from the Tower. This time the Bishop did not refuse the offer of liberty; the accursed tyrant was dead, and there was a talk in the air of a return of King Charles II.

The Bishop had been in the Tower eighteen years; he

was nearly fifty-eight when he was arrested—now he was turned seventy-five.

He knew of the death of Dean Wren ; Christopher would have told him when he visited his cell by Cromwell's permission, even if he had not known by any other means. Strafford and Laud had gone to their deaths ; that much the Bishop knew by asking the jailers what St. Peter's bell was tolling for.

Then the King himself. That had been a bitter blow ; Bishop Matthew had loved King Charles. And now he was free—at seventy-five. He came forth full of hope and faith, ready to fulfil the vow he had solemnly vowed before Almighty God that, should he ever be free and regain his possessions, he would 'return unto Him by some holy and pious employment' every penny he possessed. This he did by the erection of a chapel for Pembroke College, Cambridge. A fine old man, the Bishop of Ely ; a true Royalist and a true Wren.

Then, two months later, came King Charles the Second. The day of his proclamation in London was May 8, 1660. John Evelyn relates how, on May 29, 'his Majestie Charles II came to London after the long and sad exile and calamitous sufferings, both of the King and Church.'

'This was also his birthday.' As a matter of fact it was his thirtieth birthday ; he was two years older than Wren. Evelyn continues : 'and with a triumph of above 20,000 horse and foote, brandishing their swords and shouting in inexpressible joy, the wayes strew'd with flowers, the bells ringing, the streetes hung with tapistry, the Maior, Aldermen, and all the Companies with their liveries, chaines of gold and banners, Lords and Nobles clad in cloth of silver, gold, and velvet, the windows and balconies well set with ladies ; trumpets, music, and myriads of people flocking even so far as from Rochester, so as they were seven houres in passing the City, even from 2 in the afternoon till 9 at night.'

'I stood in the Strand,' finishes the excited Evelyn, 'and beheld it and blessed God. And all this was don without one drop of bloud shed, and by that very Army



HIS MAJESTY KING CHARLES II
Crowned in Westminster Abbey, April 23, 1661
He knighted Wren in 1674



TYPICAL GRINLING GIBBONS CHERUBS
Famous for their celestial expression
From the drawing by Cecil Brown

which rebell'd against him ; but it was the Lord's doing, for such a Restauration was never mentioned in any history, antient or modern, since the returne of the Jews from Babylonish Captivity ; nor so joyfull a day and so bright ever seene in the Nation.'

Truly a day of satisfaction for Londoners. It meant much to them—less in reality than they *thought* it meant, perhaps, but it was indeed something to know a Sovereign Lord in the land once more. If our own King George V had suffered death and we had endured eleven years of Soviet government, the return of the Prince of Wales as Edward VIII would be to us what that sunny day in May 1660 was to them.

They forgot, in their excitement, that Charles I had ruled without understanding, that Queen Henrietta had refused to be crowned by a Protestant archbishop ; they had probably also forgotten how the mob became enraged when she knelt at Tyburn to pray for the souls of the Catholics who had been executed there.

It was as well, perhaps, that they now only remembered Charles as a sad, but sincere man ; they were ready to forgive, even to welcome the doctrine of ' divine right of kings ' ; *any* king could be as ' divine ' as he wished (after what they had suffered these eleven years) and ' get away with it,' as we say in vulgar parlance.

It had all been a mistake ; that was the general view. Queen Henrietta had been devoted to Charles and he to her ; she had been driven to take refuge in France and had been kept in ignorance of her husband's execution for a whole month.

Now she was back again in London, a sweet old lady of sixty-seven, dressed in deep mourning. It was a great day for her also. Her son's triumph was her own. London's hundred churches rang out the joyful tidings of a return of a Stuart to the throne of England. She herself had caused him to be proclaimed ' King Charles II ' in France and in Holland, ten years ago ; not that it had helped him much !

London was mad with joy. Did ever one see such roses

as were thrown down from the balconies in Fleet Street and the Strand? Lovely June roses, crimson as the blood of the martyred Charles; red roses of true love—red roses of England.

And there were the old Cavaliers—tried soldiers who had gone through hell at Naseby; there they were, with tears of joy streaming down their lined faces. Poor old William Oughtred, who had been so good to Wren! He was *not* there to see it all; he had dropped dead with joy on hearing of the King's proclamation.

Nothing was left to the imagination, presumably; the whole affair was staged to perfection. *Cromwell was there also*; at least, his body was there, some one having kindly dug it up for the occasion and dragged it on a sledge to Tyburn, together with the bodies of all the old Parliamentarians who could be found. They were hanged afresh, in their coffins, with their half-decomposed faces turned towards Whitehall. Horrid it must have been, but dead men evidently *did* tell tales in those times.

As for the late Lord Protector, he was honoured by having his head stuck on a pike; he remained thus *for twenty-five years*—over Westminster Hall—his body having been cast into a pit.

Queen Henrietta ordered her coach to be stopped on London Bridge that she might look carefully at the heads of the men who had murdered her beloved husband. Hers had been the happiest royal marriage in England up to this time; had she known it, it was to be the happiest until the blissful union of Victoria and Albert. This was the day of her revenge.

And her Cavalier son? How handsome he looked as he rode his charger! Perhaps she recalled, with amusement, how she had written to a friend in France when Charles was only four months old. 'He is so ugly,' she had written, 'that I am ashamed of him, but his size and fatness supply his want of beauty.' She had no cause to be ashamed of his appearance to-day. Nor, indeed, of his reception. The cheers rang out afresh every few yards he progressed. England had a King once more; his subjects could hardly

believe it, but they shouted themselves hoarse from London Bridge to Whitehall to tell him they needed him.

There was a sprinkling of Roundheads to be seen—more, perhaps, than one would have expected. Queen Henrietta may have remembered that it was she who had thus nicknamed them, and had thereby brought about the retort *Cavalier*. She, too, was recognized and cheered, especially from Ludgate to Temple Bar, where the crowd seemed thickest.

Whether Wren witnessed the return of the King is not, of course, on record, but one imagines that he must have been there—and with the thought of his father in his mind. How dearly the Dean would have liked to be present on such an occasion! Two months later, King Charles appointed Dean Ryves, of Chichester, to succeed Dr. Wren at Windsor, an event that caused Christopher to visit his old home in order to hand over to the new Dean the Register and Note-books of the Order of the Garter which his father had committed to his care before his death. That visit must have brought back many memories.

By the autumn Gresham College was in a sufficiently decent condition to admit of the resumption of lectures, and Wren came back to town in order to take up his work there once more. Only for a year, as it happened, for in 1661 there came a more attractive call; Wren was offered the Savillian Professorship in the University of Oxford—an honour to which he could hardly remain insensible.

Above all, there was peace in the land; the grey days of the Commonwealth seemed like the tempest of yesternight that had given way to the sunshine of the morning; young men and maidens, old men and children, praised the name of God with a psalm of thanksgiving. The churches were open and were well filled; the Door of Culture and Learning stood wider open still; England was once more *Merie England*: naught became it so well as the jest of a Laughing Cavalier.

CHAPTER V

SAVILLIAN PROFESSOR AT OXFORD

RIPE scholarship was one of the outstanding characteristics of the Elizabethan age. Like birds of a feather the scholars were inclined to flock together, perhaps, but they were to be found in astonishing numbers so long as one looked in the right place for them.

There were few, however, who could rival Sir Harry Saville in the matter of sheer classic learning; his knowledge of Greek was one of the wonders of the period. It is even said that he succeeded in teaching Queen Elizabeth herself to write in the language—a feat of which he may have been justly proud!

Saville was one of those named by James I to serve on the council of scholars entrusted with the preparation of the Authorized Version of the Bible; Saville himself was largely responsible for the major portion of the four Gospels, the Acts, and the Book of Revelation.

In 1661 the King appointed Seth Ward to the bishopric of Salisbury; in order to accept it Ward was compelled to vacate the Savillian Chair of Astronomy, which Wren now filled. The Professorships of Geometry and Astronomy were by this time forty years old; Saville originally endowed them in 1619.

One of Wren's first activities was the composition of a 'Lunar Globe, representing not only the Spots and various degrees of Whiteness upon the surface, but the Hills, Eminences, and Cavities, moulded in solid work. The Globe, thus fashioned into a true model of the Moon as you turn it to the Light, represents all the menstrual Phases with a Variety of Appearances that happen from the Shadow of the Mountains and Vallies.'

The King became interested in this model, and Wren

(in a private audience with Charles) presented it to him. The inscription on the pedestal was as follows :

‘TO CHARLES II
King of Great Britain, France, and Scotland,
for the Expansion of whose Dominions since no
one Globe can suffice,
Christopher Wren dedicates another in this
Lunar Sphere.’

The King was crowned in Westminster Abbey on April 23, 1661. Evelyn was present at the ceremony and has committed a close description of all that took place to his diary. He gives a full list of the procession and considerable detail regarding the ceremony itself. Two quotations will be enough :

‘When his Majestie was enter’d, the Deane and Prebendaries brought all the regalia and deliver’d them to severall Noblemen to beare before the King who met them at the west door of the church.’ An anthem was sung while the King proceeded to the choir.

After the enthronement ‘the Bishop of London (the Archbishop of Canterbury being sick) went to every side of the throne to present the King to the People, asking if they would have him for their King and do him homage ; at this they shouted, four times, *God Save the King!* Then an anthem was sung.’

There is no record of Wren having been present, but his friendship with Evelyn may have been enough to secure him a seat in the Abbey. He had been resident in Oxford now for two months, busy with all things connected with his new Professorship. On September 12 he was created Doctor of Laws in the University of Oxford, Cambridge granting him the same degree a few months later.

In October of that same year (1661) the King granted a Royal Charter for the ‘society of thinkers,’ now for ever to be known as the Royal Society. The name, as a matter of fact, was Evelyn’s ; evidently the King approved of it, for he allowed Sir Robert Moray and Sir Paul Neile to kiss his hands in the Company’s name.

It will be remembered that Laurence Rooke now

occupied the Geometrical Chair at Gresham and that Wren succeeded him in that of Astronomy. Though scarcely birds of a feather in the ornithological sense, Rooke and Wren were great friends; the Royal Society owed as much to one as to the other in the matter of its foundation. Rooke died in June 1662, at the early age of forty—an occurrence that caused Wren great sorrow and also laid upon him a considerable amount of work connected with the Society.

Through the influence of Wilkins, Isaac Barrow (then Professor of Greek at Cambridge) was appointed to succeed Rooke at Gresham College where he remained for two years, vacating the Professorship in 1664 for that of mathematics at Cambridge. Barrow, as a mathematician, was considered second only to Newton. The point in mentioning him here is his profound admiration of Wren which he evinced in a remarkable speech—his inaugural address, in fact—delivered at the College.

Barrow said: 'One there is whose name common gratitude forbids me to pass over, whom I know not whether most to admire for his divine genius or for the sweetness of his disposition . . . once a prodigy of a boy, now a miracle of a man, and lest I seem to exaggerate, it will suffice if I name the great and good Christopher Wren, of whom I will say no more since his merit attracts the eyes of the whole world.' Barrow will be mentioned again, later.

It is perfectly amazing how the members of the newly formed Royal Society adored Wren. He was one of the youngest members—he may even have actually been the youngest—but his opinion was always sought and obtained before anything definite was done.

Even when the preliminary wording for the Charter had to be set down in black and white, Wren was asked to undertake the task. This makes interesting reading, even though it be a trifle long-winded, such references as the 'Holy Blood of Our Martyred Father' supplying a little colouring-matter here and there. After reading through the whole draft I came to the conclusion that it might indeed be a long time before there would be another Commonwealth in England. It was certainly a *Royal* Society!

Wren's scientific letters take a little digesting, and are typical of him and of the age in which he lived ; I do not think, therefore, that I shall serve any good purpose, at this stage in his career, by quoting from a long epistle to Sir Paule Neile in reply to a request by him (in the name of the Royal Society) to give Gresham College the benefit of his latest hypothesis regarding the planet Saturn. It seems to me that, as Wren is remembered as an architect and not a scientist or an astronomer (or as anything else he seems to have been with such amazing power), I should confine quotations to those referring to architecture alone.

At the same time I confess to having been sorely side-tracked in the matter of the accounts of the activities of the Royal Society.

Thus far—it seems hardly necessary to point it out—Wren has appeared as a scholar and scientist. There has been nothing about architecture or, indeed, any indication that he took interest in Art beyond a general artistic outlook displayed in his charming turns of rhetoric when speaking or writing.

Evelyn also was something of an architect and amateur town-planner, a fact quite well known to the King. It speaks well for Evelyn's sincerity that he could use his influence with Charles on Wren's behalf, especially concerning matters of which he himself possessed knowledge ; this he did unhesitatingly, with the result that Wren was asked by the King to go to Tangier and report upon the condition of the harbour and fortifications, as the Moors had recently been amusing themselves by making inroads on the place.

Tangier and Bombay were part of the dowry of Catherine of Braganza, the ' daughter of Portugal,' to whom Charles was now officially betrothed. The rest of her dowry amounted to about £500,000 sterling, and it seems that Charles decided to spend some of it in rebuilding Tangier. He therefore, at Evelyn's suggestion, offered Wren a good stipend and the reversion of the Surveyorship-General of the King's Works at the death of Sir John Denham (now in bad health) if he would undertake the work.

Matthew Wren, Christopher's cousin, was secretary to

the Lord Chancellor and, strangely enough, it was he who wrote the letter containing the offer. Wren, however, did not relish so long a journey, and wrote a letter in which he begged, for reasons of health, to be allowed to decline His Majesty's offer; he prayed His Majesty to command his services in England instead.

This was a little risky, with a Surveyorship-General within the realms of possibility. It would certainly never have done to wriggle out of a commission from *Charles the First*; there would have been no other.

Wren, however, contrived to keep in the King's favour and in England at the same time; nothing more was said about it, for the present, at all events. Charles II was very much more easy-going than his father had been, and it must be said for him that he was good to his friends.

In this particular case his interest had been thoroughly roused by Evelyn, and there is no doubt that he would have made Wren Surveyor-General forthwith, but for the fact that old Sir John Denham had served Charles I so faithfully. Denham was no architect; Evelyn always said he was more of a poet than a surveyor.

It was a matter of wonder that Denham could even make a sufficiently reasonable show of architectural knowledge to justify his holding the position in any shape or form. He was said to have been the dreamiest young man in Oxford University, and a headstrong gambler at that. Charles I, however, had found him extremely useful as a private postman when Parliament was keeping a particular keen watch on his royal person; Denham managed to convey important documents to and from the King at a very dangerous stage in that unhappy monarch's career.

Denham raised £10,000 for Charles II in Poland, going even so far as to risk a return to London in 1652. In modern language, he was 'interned' on arrival and forced by Oliver Cromwell to live within twenty miles of London; also a watch was kept upon his movements.

That he was incompetent, in the technical sense as a surveyor, is a fact, though I rather doubt if Samuel Butler was justified in so insulting him in his disgraceful *Pane-*

gyric upon Sir John Denham's Recovery from his Madness. The main point of interest to us is that Denham was rather laughed at but by no means disliked.

Charles undoubtedly felt that he could not honourably dismiss him, but in spite of Wren's having refused his first commission, created a *Deputy-Surveyorship of the King's Works*, and asked Wren to accept it.

Denham raised no objection, probably realizing that St. Paul's would have to be surveyed, sooner or later, as well as Windsor Castle, for both were falling rapidly into disrepair. Also there was Greenwich Hospital to be completed—a large undertaking of which Inigo Jones (of whom much will be heard later) had built but a small portion.

Even if Denham was not all he should have been for an officer in that position, it is indeed strange that Charles should have appointed Wren for a piece of work seemingly so unsuited to him. Wren, so far as was generally recognized, was a scholar and an astronomer with quite a flair for performing operations of a vivisectional character as well as capable of inventing anything from a barometer to a model of the moon.

That Evelyn had much to do with it I feel very certain, having studied all the available evidence; that Wren's personality was as magnetic as Wilkins's 'monstrous magnet,' of which Evelyn thought so much, seems to me to be the real truth. King Charles II succumbed to any pretty woman and to any intellectual man; he met Wren and was held by him. That seems to me to account for what occurred.

Many writers have been surprised that Wren had not hitherto attempted to practise as an architect, even if only in a mild sort of fashion; but even he, with all his brilliance, could hardly have done so before he was nineteen, and between then and thirty he lived as a citizen under the Commonwealth, which period (as will be pointed out again later) saw more destruction than construction. Wren might have been employed to design a wooden conventicle for the Roundheads, but I imagine that he would have gained little experience if he had.

The whole story of Wren's great life is that of his taking

an opportunity when it arose ; the job always seemed the job for him, and he always seemed the man for the job. As soon as he was absorbed in his works as a Fellow of All Souls he was persuaded to become Gresham Professor of Astronomy ; no sooner had he become really interested in his work at Gresham than he was expected to take the Savillian Chair at Oxford where, almost weekly, his work was disturbed by other responsibilities connected with the Royal Society ; added to which he was now appointed Deputy-Surveyor to the King's Works. One might be forgiven for facetiously suggesting that the rest of his time was his own.

No sooner had he accepted this last position than he received a letter from the Archbishop of Canterbury, greatly disturbed at the desecration of St. Mary's, Oxford, even though he naturally realized that this was due to the fact that the Acts were kept there and that secular ceremonies, such as the granting of honorary degrees, took place there periodically. His enthusiasm led him to devote over sixteen thousand pounds of his private fortune to the erection of a theatre in Oxford in which the Acts should in future be kept. This was the famous Sheldonian Theatre, named after Archbishop Gilbert Sheldon.¹

Wren certainly had no difficulty in obtaining permission to devote his time to the erection of a building so commissioned, for King Charles was constantly in contact with the Archbishop at this time. Sheldon, like Bishop Wren, had suffered imprisonment during the Commonwealth, and was now imitating him by devoting his possessions to ' pious employment.'

Wren himself seems to have taken great delight in exhibiting a model of the proposed building to his friends at the Royal Society. This he did in April 1663, but the theatre was not completed until 1669. In the meantime, however, he contrived to execute his uncle's wishes in the matter of the memorial chapel at Pembroke College, Cambridge, this being his first complete architectural work.

¹ A further account of Sheldon appears on page 206 ; a review of the Sheldonian Theatre on page 207.

He had, as a matter of fact, executed an earlier commission for the Bishop, that of a doorway in Ely Cathedral.

Having at last introduced Wren as an architect—even though he was asked to survey St. Paul's almost immediately—I prefer to leave the consideration of his greatest work to separate chapters for the simple reason that, no matter from what standpoint one regards Wren's life, St. Paul's Cathedral looms somewhere in the shadows for forty years or more ; the last stone was not laid on the lantern until 1710.

An amusing proof of Wren's inability to be in two places at once (though evidently required to be) is evident from a letter from Thomas Sprat, taking the Saville Professor to task for not appearing at Oxford at the beginning of term. It is a charming letter, in my opinion, and though he officially scolds Wren like a naughty boy who has played truant he shows deep respect for him, not to say affection. I give most of the letter, thus :

' MY DEAR SIR,—I must confess I have some little Peek against you ; therefore am not much displeased that I have this occasion of telling you some ill news. The Vice-Chancellor did yesterday send for me to enquire where the Astronomy Professor was, and the Reason of his Absence, so long after the Beginning of Term.

' I used all the Arguments I could for your Defence. I told him that Charles the Second was King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland ; that he was, by the last Act of Parliament, declared absolute Monarch in these, his Dominions ; that it was this mighty Prince who had confined you to London.

' I endeavoured to persuade him that the Drawing of Lines in Sir Harry Saville's School (by which he means to refer to the Savillian Professorship) was not altogether of so great a Concernment for the Benefit of Christendom as the Rebuilding of St. Paul's, or the Fortifying of Tangier ; for I understood those were the great Works which that extraordinary Genius of yours was judged to be employed.

' All this I urged ; but after some Discourse, he told me that . . . he took it very ill that you had not all this while

given him any Account what hindered you from the Discharge of your Office. This he bid me tell you, and I do it not very unwillingly because I see that our Friendships are so closely tied together that the same Thing which was so great a Prejudice to me (my losing your Company all this while here) does also something redound to your Disadvantage.

'And so, my dear Sir, now my Spite and Spleen are satisfied, I must needs return to my old Temper again, and faithfully assure you that I am, with the most violent Zeal and Passion—Your most affectionate and devoted Servant,

'THOMAS SPRAT.'

Wren's reply to this pleasantry has not come down to us, but he evidently took the hint and appeared at Oxford before very long. Before the end of term, Lord Brouncker,¹ President of the Royal Society, wrote in great stress of mind, saying that the King intended to pay a visit to Gresham College and that he was at his wits' end to know how to entertain him. Had Wren any suggestions?

The Savillian Professor penned a lengthy reply, of which a few excerpts must suffice. He begins thus :

'OXFORD, *July* 30, 1663.

'MY LORD,—The Act and Noise at Oxford being over, I retir'd to myself as speedily as I could to obey your Lordship and contribute something to the Collection of Experiments design'd by the Society for His Majesty's reception. I concluded on something I thought most suitable for such an Occasion; but the stupidity of our Artists here makes the apparatus so tedious that I foresee I shall not be able to bring it to anything within the Time propos'd. What in the meanwhile to suggest to your Lordship I cannot guess: the Solemnity of the Occasion. and my Solicitude for the Honour of the Society, makes me think nothing proper, nothing remarkable enough.'

Wren evidently had thought the matter over, keeping in view the fact that it was not easy to entertain the King, who must not be bored to extinction whatever happened.

'If you have any notable Experiment,' he says, 'that

¹ Lord Brouncker was the first President of the Society.

may appear to open new Light unto the Principles of Philosophy, nothing would better beseem the Pretensions of the Society, though possibly such would be too jejune for the Purpose, in which there ought to be something of Pomp.'

It was obviously advisable to present some experiment that would appeal to the King, and yet not leave any impression in his mind that the Royal Society was acting a part and coming down to his level just because he had elected to visit Gresham College. Wren saw that it would be necessary to exercise tact, for he continues :

' On the other Side, to produce Knacks only, and things to raise wonder . . . will scarce become the Gravity of the Occasion ; it must therefore be something between both, luciferous in Philosophy, and yet whose Use and Advantage is obvious, and without a lecture.'

This last remark appeals to me as being exceedingly shrewd. It would never have done to attempt to make the King sit through a discourse on some abstruse subject ; he would much prefer to converse with those around him.

Wren makes several suggestions—most of them a little on the 'highbrow' side for Charles, if I am any judge of the King's disposition. One, however, might have been suitable for his Majesty's entertainment. Wren was an authority on the functions of the human eye, and suggested the resuscitation of an old experiment of his own in the following words :

' If an artificial Eye were truly and dioptrically made (which I would have at least as big as a Tennis Ball), it would represent the picture as Nature makes it. The Cornea and Chrystalline must be Glass, the other Humours, Water. I once surveyed a Horse's Eye as exactly as I could, measuring what the Spheres and the Cornea were ; and what the Proportions of the distances of the Centers of every Sphere were upon the Axis. The Ways by which I did it are too long to rehearse . . . if your Lordship think it worth while, I shall reiterate the Experiment.'

Unfortunately, I have found no record of how they ultimately amused and instructed the King, but the above experiment, of all Wren suggested in his long letter to Lord

Brouncker, appeals to me as having been the best for the purpose, particularly as it had something to do with horses. The whole episode, to my mind, has its humorous side.

John Evelyn was again in Oxford in October 1664. An entry in his diary is of interest here.

'October 24, 1664.—Din'd at Sir Thomas Tyrrell's at Shotover. In evening went to Oxford. I went to visite Mr. Boyle whom I found with Dr. Wallis and Dr. Christopher Wren, in the Tower of the Scholes, with an inverted Tube or Telescope, observing the discus of the Sunn for the transit of Mercury that Day before it.'

Evelyn appears to have spent an enjoyable evening watching Boyle and Wren experimenting with the 'Tube,' and naturally asked Wren to take him to see the Sheldonian Theatre in Broad Street.

'Thence,' he records, *'to the New Theatre, now building at an exceeding and Royal Expence by the Ld. Archbishop of Canterbury. The Foundation had been newly laied and the whole design'd by that incomparable Genius, my worthy friend Dr. Christopher Wren, who shewed me the Model, not disdaining my Advice on some particulars.'*

That Evelyn would give his 'Advice' in a pleasant and humble fashion can never be doubted by any one who has studied his character as represented in his writings. Evelyn's admiration for Wren was only equalled by Barrow's; both men realized the freshness of his genius and thoroughly enjoyed being with him. Evelyn died some years before Wren; their friendship, now of several years' standing, was yet to remain unbroken for half a century. Evelyn had watched Wren grow from boyhood into early manhood, and his admiration for him had grown just as surely and certainly.

That Wren ultimately owed a great part of his success to Evelyn's goodness is a story yet to be told; we are still in early days. Which thought reminds me that we are also close on the memorable year 1665, the year of the Great Plague. I propose, therefore, to devote a space to some account of the plague and its effects on London as well as to some details of Wren's visit to Paris, which took place in the same year.

CHAPTER VI

THE GREAT PLAGUE: WREN GOES TO PARIS

A NY epidemic disease causing great mortality has been termed *plague*. Bubonic plague, which is the same as Oriental and Levantine plague, is a specific infectious fever characterized by the appearance of buboes, or glandular swellings, and also by the presence of carbuncles. It is extremely painful.

The first mention I have found of this particular type of disease is by Rufus, a physician living in Ephesus at the close of the first century, when the power of that great city was beginning to wane. Rufus describes a deadly plague as having been rife all over Syria, Lybia, and Egypt.

Bubonic plague did not reach Europe, apparently, until the sixth century at the earliest when the great Justinian epidemic carried off ten thousand people in one day in the city of Constantinople. In the year 546 it appeared in France; in Italy it had already appeared in 543, with deadly results; a further visitation occurred in 565 in the same country.

Bede is responsible for any knowledge we have of plague having invaded these islands in the seventh century; he gives the years 664, 672, 679, and 683 as having been notable for the appearance of the disease.

The great cycle of pestilence in the fourteenth century, known to us as *Black Death*, was probably bubonic plague. In 1348 the western counties succumbed to it early in the year, and the Midlands were affected in 1349; plague then became general until 1357, during which time the mortality was appalling. Oxford, for example, suffered badly in 1352, losing quite two-thirds of its academic population. Finally there were the dreadful outbreaks during the reign of Edward III—one in 1362 and the other in 1368.

Coming nearer to Wren's time, I find all sorts of accounts of plague in London in 1592 and again in 1599; four years later, just about the time of the accession of James I, plague in London was responsible for a mortality of 38,000, while Egypt suffered to the extent of a round million. England continued to experience serious outbreaks until 1609, after which there seems to have been a lull until Charles I came to the throne in 1625; his accession was greeted with another outbreak, with over 35,000 deaths.

After this there were no more 'feavers,' as Willis calls them, until the month of May 1665, but once this visitation began in earnest the mortality rose in an alarming fashion as the following figures will serve to show.

During May there were 43 deaths only, but 590 in June. In July, when the weather turned very hot and dry, the figures mounted to 6197; by the end of August they stood at 17,036 for that month alone. The worst was, however, to come. September's mortality, according to the bills, was given at 31,159. This makes a total of 55,025 up to the end of September; the total loss, according to the bills of mortality, was 68,496.

The origin of the Great Plague has always been a matter of dispute. Three are given: through bales of merchandise imported from Holland; Dutch war prisoners; local origin. Of these the first is the most likely.

It was, of course, simply fatal to shut up the infected houses with all their inmates huddled together; if only one person sickened, such a method was a death sentence upon the others. The qualities of infection seem to have been totally misunderstood; it never seems to have occurred to medical men, even, that the disease was what we call infectious; there was certainly no thought of isolation as we understand the term. Despite the violent nature of the symptoms, which included a terrifying hæmorrhage in most cases, sound people were allowed to enter infected houses after the previous residents were buried, and even to occupy their beds.

The winter of 1664 and the early spring of 1665 had been the driest any man could recall; it seemed as though

it could not rain. The seventh of June, according to Pepys, was the hottest ever remembered. 'This day,' he writes in his diary, 'much against my will, I did see two or three houses marked with a red cross upon the doors, and *Lord have mercy upon us* writ there, which was a sad sight to me, being the first of the kind that to my remembrance I ever saw.'

Older people, on the other hand, could well recall a similar sight; that desperate sentence appeared on many a door in 1636. It was believed at the time that the years when sobriety was observed, during the Commonwealth, were free from plague on that account, and that, conversely, the return of the Royalists (with their tendency to drink to excess) was responsible for citizens contracting the disease so readily.

The real cause was more likely to have been faulty drainage, for London was a city of narrow streets and inadequate water supply. On the other hand, it must be pointed out that plague was raging in Westminster (which was better off in this respect) before it reached the City, which it did on June 10, in the house of a doctor named Burnett living in Fenchurch Street.

Naturally there was a general exodus. Pepys says (June 21) that he finds 'all the town, almost, going out of town, the coaches and waggon being all full of people going into the country.'

Richard Baxter, a Puritan preacher friendly with Oliver Cromwell, gives an account worth reading. He says:

'How fearful people were thirty or forty, if not an hundred, miles from London, of anything that they bought from any mercer's shop; or of any goods that were brought to them; or of any persons that came to their houses. How they shut their doors against their friends, and if a man passed over the fields, how one would avoid him as we did in the times of war; and how every man was a terror to another.'

It was not long before people became superstitious. Anything out of the ordinary was cited as being a possible cause for the plague. There was a great deal of talk about

a comet that moved very slowly in the heavens, and everybody bought *Lilly's Almanac* and compared it with *Gadbury's Astrological Predictions*, quoting either or both to their friends and relatives. *Poor Robin's Almanac* was perhaps more dramatically worded than either of the other two ; people read it with absolute terror. Then appeared the street quack with his Plague Pills or ' The onely Trew Plague-water.'

So long as the rich remained in town these gentlemen did a roaring trade and sold their ' cures ' in thousands ; after the wealthier classes departed for the country, business in quackery was not quite so brisk.

Defoe gives some vivid accounts, and it is evident from all the writings I have examined that the watchmen hourly entered suspected houses, marking them outside with a cross a foot in length, while the dead-cart went round in the night, the awful call ' Bring out your Dead ' resounding along every narrow street in the City.

Practically all the shops were shut and it was a difficult matter to obtain a satisfactory food supply ; not that it mattered much to the stricken, who were unable to eat. Few people entered the streets at all ; every one seemed afraid to venture out. So desolate were the thoroughfares that grass actually began to grow between the stones of the roadway. According to a contemporary writer (Thomas Vincent, a Nonconformist clergyman) there was ' a deep silence in every place, especially within the walls.'

This same writer describes how he misses ' the prancing horses ' and the ' rattling coaches ' ; there is no ' calling in customers nor offering wares.' London is, for the first time in its history, perhaps, without its famous street cries. Vincent observes that ' if any voice be heard it is the groans of dying persons breathing forth their last, and the funeral knells of them that are ready to be carried to their graves. Shutting up of the visited houses (there being so many) is at an end, and most of the well are mingled with the sick which otherwise would have got no help.'

In the September, when the mortality rose so quickly, the management of affairs seems to have got entirely out of

hand. There were so many simultaneous deaths that it became impossible to deal with them, greatly to the public danger, for it appears that decomposition was unpleasantly rapid. In most houses (to quote Vincent again) 'half the family is swept away; in some from the youngest to the oldest; few escape, but with the death of one or two.

'Never did so many husbands and wives die together,' he continues; 'never did so many parents carry their children with them to the grave and go together to the same house under the earth who had lived together in the same house upon it. Now the nights are too short to bury the dead; the whole day, though at so great a length, is hardly sufficient to light the dead that fall thereon to their graves.'

Pepys and Evelyn both testify to the same thing. At first the dead were buried in the usual manner and in coffins; later, plague-pits were dug into which high and low, rich and poor, went together. One of these is now the graveyard (with subsequent burials over the actual pit) of what used to be called St. John's Wood Chapel, on the east side of Wellington Road, St. John's Wood. The church is now called St. John's, Regent's Park. To me it is a place of many memories; I was its organist for ten years.

Incidentally, the burial-ground contains the tomb of the famous Joanna Southcott, the religious fanatic who flourished in the reign of George III. It will be remembered that, during the War, there were agitations for the opening of the grave, supposed to contain a box in which prophecies regarding the War itself were secreted. I was organist there at the time, and well recall the fact that the Vicar had to take a very definite line of action to prevent the grave being touched.

This hardly bears on Wren's period, but the fact remains that thirty-three thousand plague victims are said to be buried beneath the grounds of that church.

At the beginning of 1666 the plague abated and town began to fill again. Pepys records how he rode in Lord Brouncker's carriage to Covent Garden. 'What a staring to see a nobleman's coach come to town!' he remarks.

'And Porters everywhere bow to us, and such a begging of beggars.'

On January 22, Pepys reports the first meeting of Gresham College since the plague. 'Dr. Goddard did fill us with talk,' says the worthy Secretary, 'in defence of his and his fellow-physicians' going out of town in the plague-time, saying that their particular patients were most gone out of town, and they left at liberty.'

Pepys himself remained in London all through the plague, and apparently had no opinion of the medical men who fled merely because their own patients had gone and who did not remain to minister to the sick. Panel patients were unknown then, seemingly to the greater misfortune of the poorer classes.

Pepys had a bad opinion of the clergy, probably not without cause. His entry for February 4 is very characteristic. 'Lord's Day: and my wife and I the first time together at church since the plague.' He does not say which church, but it was 'now only because of Mr. Mills coming home to preach his first sermon.'

Evidently Pepys was there in a critical mood, for his next words have a sting in them. 'Expecting,' he writes, 'a great excuse for his leaving the parish before anybody went, and now staying until all are come home, but he made a very poor and short excuse, and a bad sermon.'

Pepys had every justification for taking a hard view of those who 'ran away' during the plague, as he himself was one of very few who refused to leave his work. A year previously (1664) he had become a very active member of the board of the Royal Fishery, and also a prominent figure at the meetings of the Royal Society where he naturally came into contact with Wren a great deal. Wren and Pepys were always on cordial terms.

It must be remembered that the war with the Dutch was going on all this time, and it is impossible not to admire the courage of Samuel Pepys. His view was that if soldiers and sailors could face the terrors of war, he could face those of the plague. He continued to eat and drink in his



'MR. SECRETARY SAMUEL PEPYS'

(1633-1703)

Advocate for the Navy, 1668 ; President of the Royal Society, 1684-86



WREN'S MASTER-CARVER:
GRINLING GIBBONS
(1648-1720)

(See pp. 119-121)

customary hearty fashion ; probably he thus kept himself fit and escaped the disease.

I have referred to him as 'the worthy Secretary,' meaning Secretary to the Navy. As a point of fact, such a description, though the general one, is here a little ahead of time. After the war ended, which was not until 1667, the Duke of York, afterwards James II, was responsible for securing the services of Pepys as Advocate for the Navy.

Parliamentary discussions took place immediately peace was declared, and the action of the Navy was severely criticized. Both the Duke of York and the King himself realized that some one must be employed to defend the honour of the Service, and Pepys was chosen. Not without reason, apparently, for the good Samuel delivered a speech in such terms and with such vigour at the bar of the House of Commons (March 5, 1668) as completely to overwhelm the members.

Had they but known it, the charges brought forward were true almost to the minutest detail, but something had to be done to throw dust in their eyes, and Pepys succeeded in doing it. He had all the facts before him, and also knew that the faults could not be honestly laid at the door of the naval authorities only. Basing his arguments on this one fact, he contrived to make it seem as though the officials were entirely without blame.

After this Pepys rather fancied himself as a speaker, and made up his mind to stand for Parliament. He stood for Aldborough, but was unable to canvass his constituency in person owing to the death of his wife ; in consequence of this he was not elected. At the next election in 1673 he stood for Castle Rising and made a succession of rousing speeches, with the result that he came out top of the poll.

Something went wrong, however, and the validity of his election was questioned by Offley, his opponent. The matter was gone into thoroughly, and the decision went against Pepys ; but the House was prorogued at the time, and nothing further occurred. Friendship with the Duke of York was not good for Pepys at this time. The Test

Act, which prohibited Romanists holding offices under the Crown, caused Duke James himself to be disappointed from his position, and Pepys himself was accused of 'popery' in that he was supposed to have an altar and a crucifix within his house; also it was rumoured that Mrs. Pepys had died a Roman Catholic.

It was in 1673 that Pepys was appointed by King Charles to be Secretary of the Admiralty; six years later he became member for Harwich. In 1682 he was with James in Scotland, where he recorded his opinion of the Scotch in definite terms; he considered their habits of the filthiest—in which he was probably right.

In 1684 Pepys was elected President of the Royal Society, and during the reign of James II became virtually Minister for the Navy. He was dismissed after the accession of William III, and died at his house in Clapham on May 25, 1703. He spent his last years in writing voluminous letters to his friends, the chief of whom were Dryden and John Evelyn.

I have taken the opportunity afforded me at this juncture to sketch the latter part of his career thus briefly because he is one of the spectacular figures of the period, and also because of his friendship with Wren. Whether Wren really admired the character of Pepys is a matter on which I should not care to express an opinion.

Pepys is so transparent to us who have had the privilege of examining his diary (which I imagine Wren had not) that we may reasonably suppose Wren to have recognized his honesty and to have liked him for it. No man who was not honest at heart could ever have brought himself to record his innermost thoughts in so unblushing a fashion. I have read the entire diary and have come to the conclusion that it is unique in literature. He wrote it in Shelton's system of tachygraphy, published in 1641, but being suspicious by nature and certainly determined that no one should ever cast his eye upon such a personal document, Pepys elaborated Shelton's system by improvements of his own, even going to the extent of rendering into cipher whole passages in foreign languages. Thus he could leave

his precious diary lying about his desk without much fear of any of his servants or even his wife being able to decode it.

The records in it are amazing and sometimes disgusting. How he kicked his cook, how he gave his wife a black eye, how annoyed he was because these actions were witnessed by others, how he suffered remorse, how he made deep confession of his guilt in his prayers, how he resolved to control himself for the future, how he excused himself when he broke out afresh, come out as clearly as do his actions with regard to the wives of naval men who came to his private room at the Admiralty for their husband's pay and who paid their own price before the money was handed over.

His sensuousness was the sensuousness of the age ; he was by no means the only official who took his lead from the King. The later Stuart period was as vicious as any that succeeded it, with the possible exception of that of George IV—a fact only worth mentioning here because it is possible to draw a pleasant comparison by pointing to the superb dignity and clean living of Wren and Evelyn, who stood above the moral filth of their times. No two finer characters or more perfect English gentlemen lived in *any* period of our history, from the Stone Age to this included.

We left Pepys commenting upon the action of the clergy during the plague. His view was a correct one ; he had a way of being extremely accurate in many of his views. The Churchmen certainly did not distinguish themselves by their unselfishness ; they simply closed their churches and left their parishioners to their fate. The nonconforming ministers seem to have been more praiseworthy, judging by what I have read ; some of them went into the ' forsaken pulpits, though prohibited.' Also they visited the sick and procured what relief they could for the poor, ' especially those that were shut up.' All they received in the way of reward was restraint under the Five Mile Act. It did not always pay to be honest in those days.

Most of this time Wren was in Paris. Probably Pepys placed him in the category of ' shirkers ' ; if he did, he has

not recorded the fact. That Wren was wise in going hardly needs saying ; his health was by no means robust.

The immediate cause of his leaving London for Paris was an introduction to the Earl of St. Albans, at that time English Ambassador in the French capital. Lord St. Albans was himself a man of parts, and Wren found him an interesting and agreeable companion.

The recent great French architectural activity had probably reached Wren's ears ; most writers seem to think this to be true. I am left wondering whether the fact really impressed Wren or not. I can never make up my mind as to his exact attitude towards architecture at this period in his life. He was surrounded with attractive buildings in Oxford, even if those in London did not impress him, but he seems to have been so devoted to science as to make architecture a very secondary consideration. Even when he was appointed Assistant-Surveyor to the King's Works it was largely on account of his scientific and geometrical attainments.

Looking at his subsequent career as an architect, it is not unreasonable to regard his experience up to this time as a mere dabbling in building. His retention of the Savillian Chair proved his desire to remain a scientist so far as his profession was concerned, whatever he might have been inclined to do as a sort of hobby. I feel convinced that Lord St. Albans imagined that he was taking a young scientist with him to spend a short vacation in Paris ; I cannot be persuaded that he could have considered that he was escorting England's most famous architect.

When he introduced Wren, surely it was as the noted English Scholar, first and foremost—as a scientist, astronomer, mathematician, geometrician, inventor—as anything in the wide world but an architect.

I doubt if it has been realized to the full, even yet, how important this short visit of six months was to Wren and how greatly it affected his after life. As soon as he set foot on French soil he seems to have been caught by the sight of a few French domes and to have been filled with creative ideas. There was plenty of Flamboyant Gothic

for his admiration if he so chose to lavish it ; he seems to have passed it by.

The fame of St. Peter's, Rome, had begun to affect Parisian architects and builders ; the church of St. Paul and St. Louis, close to the Place des Vosges, for example, attracted Wren's eye probably no less than Ste Marie des Feuillantines ; that he was deeply impressed with the domes of the Sorbonne and the Val-de-Grâce is quite certain. The façade of the Sorbonne gave Wren something to ponder over, and there is little doubt that he made a mental note of the saucer-domes of the interior, for those with which he subsequently decorated his vaulting at St. Paul's are very similar in appearance.

Writers who have failed to realize the importance of this visit of Wren to Paris at the impressionable age of thirty-three, when his faculties for absorption were never higher—and most of them *have* failed to realize it—have lost the real key to Wren's greatness.

I point again to Oxford. His surroundings there surely should have set up in him a desire to express himself architecturally, for no city in England had more to offer him. He had never seen a dome worth calling a dome until he visited France ; spires he had seen in plenty. So that his English surroundings in the most English of English cities had not captured his spirit ; he lived in a city of spires, but he devoted his time to the study of the heavens.

Then we find him taking a short holiday in France, and we also find him combining his classic thoughts with what France had to show him of a classic nature. His imagination was fired from the first hour he set foot in Paris ; creative ideas of the right kind formed in his quick brain. Because they were of the right kind they were not wholly imitative ; creative instincts absorb first to expel later ; when they expel they bring forth the real soul of the man.

So it was with Wren. His genius, his real spark of divinity, caused him to take in innumerable impressions at once. However general his thoughts may have been at first, the desire to specialize was quickly paramount. This was *Renaissance* architecture he was admiring ; there

was Gothic, too, but he had seen enough and had never wished to concern himself with it. Now that he had seen a style of building that appealed to him as being a form in which he could express himself, his whole outlook on Art instantly underwent a change.

That is what I feel so many writers have missed. They have not realized that, *without any preconceived ideas worth calling such*, Christopher Wren suddenly found himself face to face with something that made an architect of him in a second of time. The sight of a few domes—not very wonderful domes, *but domes*—brought about a climax in his artistic career.

He was then and there converted from a scientist to an architect. The fact that he may not have had a drawing-lesson in his life did not signify in the least ; he had genius enough and to spare ; technique came quickly, as it always does with true genius. He had watched the sun setting against the curve of a cupola ; he had seen the moon shine down upon Richelieu's Sorbonne ; he had spent his time in company with the greatest Parisian architects, sculptors, and painters of the age. Small wonder was it that he wrote to Dr. Bateman, who was the means of bringing him into contact with St. Albans, to express his gratitude for the opportunity the Doctor had thus given him. The letter is that of a young—a very young genius. I quote such excerpts as I have thought to be at once interesting and characteristic of the writer :

‘ I have busied myself in surveying the most esteem'd Fabricks of Paris, and the Country around ; the Louvre for a while was my daily Object, where no less than a thousand Hands are constantly employ'd in the Works ; some in laying mighty Foundations, some in raising the Stories, Columns, Entablements, etc., with vast Stones, by great and useful Engines ; others in Carving, Inlaying of Marbles, Plaistering, Painting, Gilding, etc. Which altogether make a School of Architecture, the best probably, at this Day in Europe.’

‘ An Academy of Painters, Sculptors, Architects, and the chief Artificers of the Louvre, meet every first and last

Saturday of the Month. Mons. Colbert, Superintendent, comes to the Works of the Louvre every Wednesday, and, if Business hinders not, Thursday. The Workmen are paid every Sunday duly.'

'The King's Houses I could not miss; Fontainebleau has a stately Wildness and Vastness suitable to the Desert it stands in. The antique Mass of the Castle of St. Germain, and the Hanging-gardens are delightful surprising (I mean to any man of Judgement) for the Pleasures below vanish away in the Breath that is spent in ascending.'

'After the incomparable Villas of Vaux and Maisons, I shall but name Ruel, Courances, Chilly, Essoane' (he gives a long list here) 'all which, and I might add many others, I have survey'd; and that I might not lose the Impressions of them, *I shall bring you almost all France on paper*, which I found by some or other ready design'd to my Hand, in which I have spent both Labour and Money. Bernini's Design of the Louvre I would have given my skin for, but the old reserv'd Italian gave me but a few minutes View; it was five little Designs in Paper for which he hath received as many thousand Pistoles; I had only Time to copy it in my Fancy and Memory; I shall be able by Discourse, and a Crayon, to give you a tolerable Account of it.'

'I hope I shall give you a very good Account of all the best Artists in France; my Business now is to pry into Trades and Arts. I put myself into all Shapes to humour them, 'tis a Comedy to me, and tho' sometimes Expenceful, I am loth yet to leave it.'

He concludes:

'My Lord Berkley returns to England at Christmas, when I propose to take the opportunity of his Company, and by that Time, to perfect what I have on the Anvil; *Observations on the present State of Architecture, Arts, and Manufactures in France.*'

In perfecting what he 'had on the Anvil' he quietly sorted out his impressions. He actually copied little enough of what he saw in France; Wren was too inventive to copy. He contented himself by allowing his impressions

to sink in ; he then set about spinning like a spider. He extracted all that appealed to him as being beautiful and right architecturally and, having made his decisions, expressed himself as soon as an opportunity came his way.

Little did he imagine, in his wildest dreams, that a task awaited him that would take him the best part of forty years before he could say with any sincerity that the great work of his life was done. St. Paul's, like Rome, was not to be built in a day ; but had he known it, the day was fast approaching when he would be commanded to build a cathedral that should be the Crown of London.

There were four great influences in the life of Christopher Wren, influences that were responsible for what we know him to have been : his father, who taught him to be loyal to the Throne of England ; Holder, who taught him to love the heavens ; Busby, who moulded his early character and instilled into him the refinement that comes alone from classic learning ; France, that taught him to raise a mightier dome than ever he had seen beyond her shores.

Lastly, there was the gentle John Evelyn, who now awaited his return to London, who was soon to present him to the King as the Scholar of to-day, the Builder of to-morrow.

CHAPTER VII

SURVEYING OLD ST. PAUL'S

HISTORIANS are by no means at one in the matter of their accounts of St. Paul's. In elucidating, or attempting to elucidate, sadly conflicting statements I have been in some places forced to tread cautiously, for fact and fallacy, truth and tradition, seem to be often entangled. Tradition has it that the earliest building on the present site was a temple of Diana erected by the Romans; but it is not easy to assign a date to its erection, even if it ever existed at all.

More than one writer has referred to a certain bishop of London, Restitutus by name, alive in the year 314. If it is true that he had ideas of converting the Roman temple into a Christian church it would seem that he was not ill-named; the trouble about him, despite what has been written regarding his personality, is that evidence of his existence is so slender that it may be safer to discard it altogether.¹

I am personally much more inclined to begin with Bede, who at least possessed an admirable faculty for writing clear Latin and who may be relied upon for having an eye for a fact when one came his way. He seems to think

¹ On the other hand, I feel I ought to point out that the name of Restitutus appears in the list of Bishops given in Crockford together with the date 314. No other name occurs until 604, when that of Mellitus is given. He came over with Augustin in 506. Having refused to administer the Holy Communion to the sons of King Ethelbert because they were not baptized, he was deprived of his bishopric, which seems to have become vacant until Bishop Cedd arrived in 654. My opinion is that Mellitus, whether Bishop of London or not, began on the building of St. Paul's somewhere about the year 600; this view is based upon Bede's statements. Mellitus, by the way, became the third Primate of England, Augustin being the first (597), and Laurentius the second (604): he was consecrated Archbishop in 619.

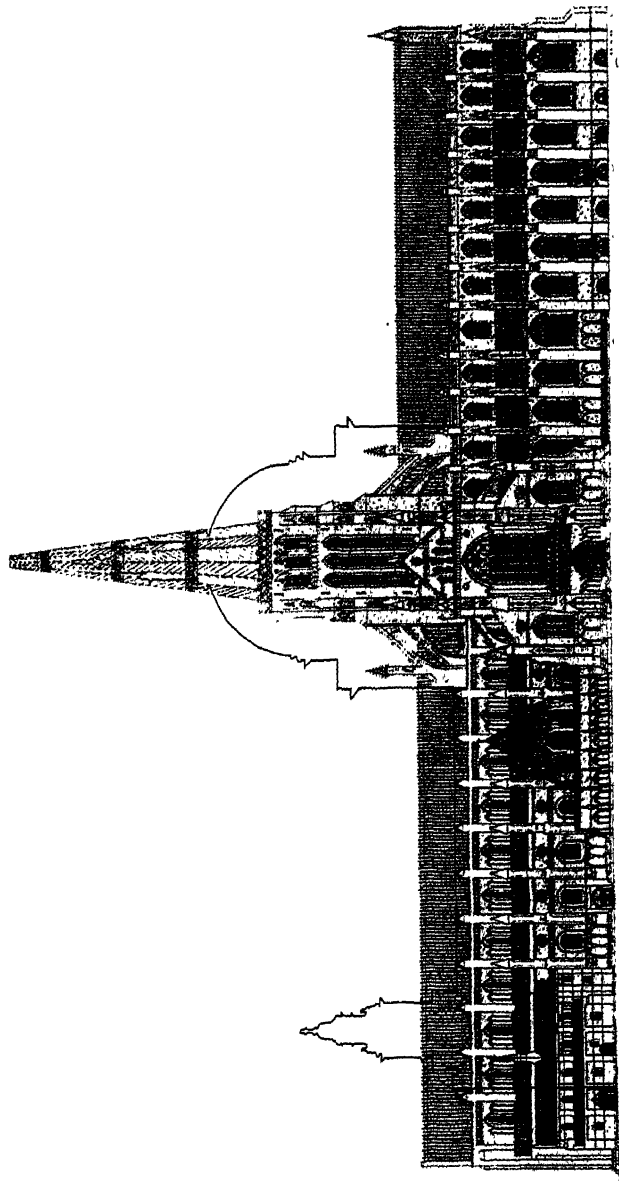
that the first church on the site was built by Ethelbert, King of Kent for Mellitus whom St. Augustine consecrated bishop of London in 604. If Bede is right—and there is not much reason to doubt him—I should be inclined to suggest that the date of the building of the first St. Paul's must have begun not earlier than 600—probably a few years later. My reason is that Ethelbert, who, incidentally, was a great-grandson of Hengest, was far too occupied in suppressing Mercians and Saxons to give his attention to church building until after that year. On the other hand, he must have commenced operations fairly early in the century as his death occurred in 616.

Mellitus was not English ; he was sent over here by Pope Gregory the Great who manifestly held a high opinion of his powers. Ultimately Mellitus became Archbishop of Canterbury.

He was distinctly a missionary. It may have been that he had been compelled to submit to a certain amount of rough handling in various stages of his extensive travels, and that he consequently entertained a fellow-feeling for St. Paul ; at all events, he dedicated the church to him and not to St. Peter which would have been more in conformity with the general procedure abroad. Also he may have been influenced by the fact that Westminster Abbey was already dedicated to St. Peter.

The date of the completion of the first St. Paul's is no more certain than that of the laying of its foundation-stone ; all that is definite is that it passed through many vicissitudes during its life of roughly four and a half centuries, ultimately being destroyed by fire in 1087. This brings us to the early days of the reign of Rufus, and also to the real old St. Paul's which Wren was called upon to survey six hundred years later still.

Accounts differ as to when Bishop Maurice actually undertook the erection of a new cathedral ; some give it as early as 1083, others date it 1086 and 1087 respectively. I am inclined to suggest that William the Conqueror had contemplated restoration in the last days of his life, and that the fire had prevented the necessity. If so,



THE SOUTH SIDE OF OLD ST. PAUL'S, BEGUN IN 1088; DESTROYED BY THE FIRE OF LONDON, 1666
The Superimposition, by Cecil Brown, of the outline of the present cathedral makes an interesting comparison in the matter of the length and height of the two buildings. Wren's cathedral is considerably the shorter of the two, but wider. The old steeple soared 150 feet above the cross on Wren's dome

the Great Fire of 1666 was a case of history repeating itself, for exactly the same thing happened with Charles II. I therefore suggest 1088 as the actual year when Bishop Maurice began his task of rebuilding St. Paul's.

Then followed a period of inactivity. Rufus was no friend to the Church and very little of ecclesiastical value is recorded during his reign. The early part of that of Henry I cannot have been much better, but towards the end of it St. Paul's was no doubt beginning to present an attractive appearance.

In 1136 a fire broke out in the neighbourhood of London Bridge, eventually spreading and causing serious damage to the cathedral. Naturally it was repaired, but the work must have been slow, even for those times, because the tower was not completed until 1221; some say even later. Before the death of Henry III a beautiful English choir was added. Thirty years later still, the energetic Bishop Fulk declared its proportions too small and set about having it enlarged.

Altogether, in the building, St. Paul's was two hundred years at least; it was begun in the days of feudalism and strife; it was consecrated in the somewhat pleasanter days of Edward I. Even then there must have been some dissatisfaction with its external appearance, for an entirely new spire was built at the beginning of the fourteenth century. This eventually enjoyed the distinction of being the highest ecclesiastical spire in Europe.

The early English builders evidently admired much of the Norman work, especially that in the nave, for when they came to do some patchwork they left it untouched, contenting themselves here and there with a little encasing. As a specimen of the Early Decorated style the cathedral was decidedly impressive.

In 1444 (Henry VI) 'Paule's Steple was set on Fier with Lightening on Candilmas Even but after quenchid.' The damage done was extensive and severe, and the spire was not repaired until 1462. Then came the fire of 1561, during the reign of Elizabeth. A thunderstorm of great severity broke over London on Wednesday, June 4, of

that year, and the famous spire was struck. The steeple burned downwards, the fabric falling on every side.

Of all the records of this fire, that in the Guildhall is probably the clearest. 'The Steple was sodenly sett on fyre wythe Lyghtenynge, and all the timber bothe of the Church and Steple pytyously brent and utterly consumyd, even to the very Stone worke therof.' After the experience, or, more correctly, the historical record, of the two former fires it is quite likely that the cathedral authorities decided against rebuilding the steeple. Unfortunately, Benjamin Franklin did not live in those days; thus it was yet another two hundred years before the advent of the lightning conductor.

The damage to the roof, not only by reason of the actual fire but as a result of the steeple falling, was, of course, considerable, though it is pleasant to read that 'the City very frankly and lovyngly and wylynglye grant three thousand marks of currante Englishe moneye.' One imagines that the City must indeed have been willing to have thus spelt the word; it has a picturesque emphasis about it that is singularly arresting.

After this, the third fire, there came a still, small voice—or so it would seem—for we hear little enough about St. Paul's Cathedral until the time of James I, when its condition was of such disrepair that the King was asked personally to visit the building. This he did, with the result that Inigo Jones was called upon to make a survey. In taking this step one imagines James must have realized that Inigo Jones knew nothing and cared less about architecture as practised in England; the Palace of Whitehall, surely, must have shown his complete devotion to the Italian Palladio whose opinions on architecture, and building generally, Jones had already published in four volumes.

Inigo Jones was born in 1573. As a young man he studied landscape painting in Italy but soon transferred his affections to architecture, his adherence to the principles laid down by Palladio gaining for him an immense reputation in Venice where he designed some notable buildings.

Palladio died when Jones was seven, but through the

influence of both men Venice flattered itself it was to enjoy a direct connexion with early classic architecture, for not only was Palladio imbued with the spirit of Alberti (generally considered to be the restorer of ancient styles) but even of the great Vitruvius himself. So that Inigo Jones, with his Italian-looking Christian name and Celtic-looking surname, was expected to disapprove of anything and everything even remotely connected with the Gothic style—a reputation he was careful to live up to.

Jones designed much of the scenery for Court masques in England, being appointed architect both to the Queen and to Prince Henry. Here it was that he came into collision with Ben Jonson with whom he quarrelled violently. At the death of the Prince he went back to Italy for a while, but finally settled in London in 1615.

So long as his views on architecture could be accepted, there is no doubt that Inigo Jones was the best man, even the only man for the work, though it is surprising that James accepted as infallible the opinions of one who could conclude that Stonehenge was once a Roman temple.

The work on St. Paul's was not actually begun until 1633, by which time it must have been imperative if the building was to be saved at all. Jones decided to accept the Norman work, especially as he saw little chance of being allowed to spend money too freely; anything he really objected to he carefully disguised. His classic portico which, with its flanking towers, stood at least a hundred feet to the west of where Wren's present front stands, was an imposing structure.

Its main feature was a set of monolithic Corinthian pillars, supporting the customary entablature and pediment (page 143). In order to make room for his portico Jones pulled down part of the church of St. Gregory-by-St.-Paul—an action that brought him into hot conflict with the parishioners. This church, until then, actually joined the cathedral on the south-west.

Jones was right and the parish was wrong—of that there is not the slightest doubt—but if he treated the parishioners as he treated Ben Jonson, it may be safely

concluded that they were not allowed to have much say in the matter.

Then, again, the eastern part of the cathedral had long been incorporated with the parish church of St. Faith; in 1255 part of a new crypt was allotted to the parish in return, with what satisfaction has not transpired.

Jones's work at St. Paul's consisted of building the classic portico (despite its incongruity), altering as much of the nave as he dared, and coating the outside walls with ashlar. The King paid for the portico, which Wren subsequently was generous enough to describe as an 'intire and excellent piece.' I am surprised that he did not remark upon the fact that majestic though it certainly was, it was out of keeping with the rest of the cathedral, for that has been the general opinion since.

Like the course of true love, Jones's operations did not run smooth; during the Commonwealth, particularly, the cathedral went through a very bad period. Dugdale records that 'during the Usurpation, the stately Portico, being converted into Shops for Seamstresses and other Trades with Lofts and Stairs ascending thereto, the Statues had been despitefully thrown down and broken in pieces.'

Furthermore, Parliamentary soldiers soon interrupted activities by pulling down the scaffolds and turning the nave into a cavalry barracks. Also matters were not improved when the roof of the south transept suddenly fell in.

A short, and decidedly anti-Cromwell tract, published at the time, gives an idea of the appalling desecration of St. Paul's before the Restoration. 'You may see the famous Cathedrall of St. Paule's, once sacred to the worship of God, now made a stable for horses. This last week one of their mares, foaling in the Church, the Soldiers took it upon them to baptize the Colt, and taking one Hawes and Cobbitt, made them stand for the godfathers, and one Rachell Barber (one of their ammunition bagages) for the godmother.'

Francis Osborn, in his interesting *Traditionall Memoyres of the Raigne of King James*, records what we should con-

sider gross irreverence ; judging by the style of his writing, it is quite evident that he himself had no opinion of the tendency of the age. 'It became the fashion,' he says, 'of those times, and did so continue till these, for the principall Gentry, Lords and Commons, and men of all professions not merely Mechanick, to meet in Paul's Church by 11 and walk in the middle Ile till 12, and after dinner from 3 to 6, during which time some discourse of Businessse, others of Newes.'

This, seemingly, refers to the week-time, but several writers describe St. Paul's Cathedral as being made the scene of a kind of fashionable church parade of a Sunday morning. Weaver, in his *Ancient Funeral Monuments*, published in 1631, remarks that 'it could be wished that walking in the middle Ile of St. Paule's might be forborne.'

There is rather a puzzling reference, made by several writers of the period, to a certain horse called Marocco. In a pamphlet called *Maroccus Extaticus* the doings of this extraordinary animal are clearly set forth. The value of the journal as literature is by no means high ; I should not have drawn attention to it but for the fact that I have found so many references to this horse. One account will suffice. It says : 'A horse climed up the staircase to the top of Paul's steple in 1609.'

The statement rather strains one's powers of credence, but the next paragraph is interesting in that it sheds a little light on the current opinion of the condition of the cathedral. It appears that Marocco's owner had the forethought to address the animal before starting him off. 'Take heed,' he advised, 'how you look down into the yard *for the rails are as rotten as your grandfather.*' Judging from contemporary writings, the feat caused an immense sensation at the time but no one went so far as to hazard an opinion as to how the horse managed to turn round at the top for the downward journey.

So far as 'walking in Paule's' is concerned, it is pleasant to note that Charles I, through the influence of Archbishop Laud, ultimately put an end to it. Even so, it would appear that the practice was not entirely discontinued because

John Earle, Bishop of Salisbury in 1663, wrote a letter to a friend in which he referred to a courtier (evidently known to them both) in these words: 'If you find him not heere *you shall in Paule's* with a Pick-tooth in his hat, a cape cloak, and a long Stocking.' It is to be hoped that the gentleman was readily recognized from such an intimate description. The good bishop, evidently jealous for the cathedral, states his strong objections to 'countrymen coming up the Tearme and with their hobnayleshoos grinding the faces of the poore stones.'

For that matter, irreverence seems to have been rife at all periods in the history of St. Paul's. In 1411, on 'the Friday next before the Feast of St. Bartholomew,' a proclamation was issued by command of Henry IV to the effect that 'no manere man ne child, of what estate or condicioun that he be, be so hardy as to wrestell or make any wrestlyng within the Seintuary ne the boundes of Poule's, ne in non other open place within the Citee of Londone upon payne of emprisonement of fourty dayes.'

Going back still further naturally takes us into a period when it was not safe to travel alone at night-time. A reference is made to St. Paul's churchyard in a record dated 1285 (Edward I):

'By lurking of thieves and other lewd people within the precinct of this churchyard divers robberies and homicides had oft times been committed therein.' The King evidently sought to put an end to the nuisance by having a wall constructed to prevent the churchyard being a public thoroughfare after dark, for the proclamation concludes thus: 'for the preventing, therefore, of the like in future (the King grants) a licence to include the same churchyard with a wall on every side.' One cannot refrain from commenting upon the picturesque expression 'to include *with* a wall,' which latter, incidentally, was to have 'fitting gates and posterns therein to be opened every morning and closed every night.'

To the north-east of old St. Paul's stood the famous Paul's Cross with an open-air pulpit, the space round which was the scene of many a religious disputation as well as the

promulgation of papal bulls. In later days doctrines of a very different character were broadcast to the passers-by; nearly all the great Reformation preachers appeared at Paul's Cross.

Charming indeed must have been the scene on the third day of May, in the year 1569, as a result of the proclamation 'that at the Sermons at Paule's Crosse this Whitson hollidaies not only my Lord Maior and Aldren to be ther in Scarlett for Whitson Sunday and Monday, and in Violet for Tuesdaye, but their wives also to be ther, they in such apparell as they like to goe, and to be placed in such places as is provided for them.'

The popularity of James I must have been considerable, at any rate in the earlier part of his reign, because it is recorded that 'the Saddlers' Company attend at Paul's Cross on the anniversary of the King's delivery from the Gowrie Conspiracy, a custom they observed annually until 1616.' The anniversary was August 5, the plot an attack on the person of the King by the Earl of Gowrie. His Majesty went up in the estimation of the Cavaliers when he handled his opponent successfully and managed to overpower him by superior physical strength; such matters were well thought of in those days. In 1643 St. Paul's Cross was removed, but a memorial erected under the will of H. C. Richards, K.C., M.P., and unveiled in 1910, stands near the original site.

We left Wren in Paris. According to most writers he returned to England at the end of February, 1666, by which time the plague had spent itself in London, though it still lingered in the suburbs. I am inclined to suggest, with all due respect to what others have written, that he was back in London by the middle of February at the latest, because there is an entry in Pepys' diary to the effect that he 'went to my Lord Brouncker's, and there was Sir Robert Murray . . . here come (also) Mr. Hooke . . . *Dr. Wren*, and many others.'

The point is hardly of consequence. What was of considerable importance at this stage in Wren's career was the fact that the King definitely asked him to survey

St. Paul's. It is perfectly clear that Wren was not given to understand that he would be left free to build the cathedral of his dreams ; indeed the idea was restoration rather than construction of a new church.

Wren's views on architecture were now well known. Whether Charles himself had leanings towards Gothic methods is difficult to say with any certainty ; it is quite likely, as there were plenty of specimens about. That the Dean and Chapter were likely to require adherence to a Gothic ground-plan, at least, was perfectly certain. Every member of the Commission must have realized that Wren had scarcely been to Paris for nothing, and also, apart from the actual style he would be almost sure to advocate, those who knew him best would be prepared for a strong opposition on his part to anything in the nature of patch-work.

I imagine that Wren made up his mind from the very first that he would have a hard fight to get his own way, not so much with Charles himself, as with the rest of the Commission. He probably realized that the King might be led either way, but that it would be a case of touch and go as to whether the Dean and Chapter would win and demand a Gothic building, or whether he would triumph and build a Renaissance cathedral after his own heart.

Wren now discovered that he indeed had a good friend in John Evelyn, who was particularly intimate with the King ; many were the quiet hints that Evelyn still continued to give Charles regarding Wren's powers. Had it not been for Evelyn, Grinling Gibbons might never have been given the chance to execute the carving that decorates St. Paul's to-day. A hot Royalist, Evelyn believed in having a King, even if one could not be found more to his personal liking than Charles II, of whose Court he thoroughly disapproved. He was a man of determination but extraordinarily content to take a back seat when he felt that there was some one at hand more capable than himself. That Wren, who (it must be remembered) was nearly twenty years younger, stood in Evelyn's light on more than one occasion is an incontrovertible fact ; it is equally certain that Evelyn never allowed what might have been

justifiable jealousy to pervade his thoughts for a moment of time.

That Evelyn was equally friendly with the Dean of St. Paul's was a matter of considerable assistance to Wren in that his influence was enough, as it proved, to keep the Dean on Wren's side. It will be advantageous at this point to learn something about the Dean of St. Paul's.

William Sancroft was a shrewd, learned man whose convictions were definite and strong. Moreover, he had the courage of even the more dangerous of them. He was, at this time, a virile and active man of fifty years of age in his third year as Dean of St. Paul's, having been installed in 1664 after twelve months as Dean of York. During his two years in London he had rebuilt the deanery, at a personal cost of £2500, and had also improved its revenue; no one was more concerned now regarding the safety and welfare of the cathedral than he.

Sancroft shared Evelyn's views concerning the King; for all we know, they may have been Wren's private opinions also. At all events, when Charles lay on his death-bed it was Sancroft who attended him, and it was Sancroft who 'made to him a very weighty exhortation in which he used a good deal of freedom.'

In many ways the Dean must have been a man after Wren's own heart for, like all the Wrens, he was fearless to a point of recklessness. It must have required a certain amount of conviction and, indeed, fortitude, to write out with his own hand the petition against the Declaration of Indulgence, with a man of James II's temperament on the throne. The action, as it happened, sent him to the Tower, and even though he was acquitted after a few days, he must have realized that he was playing a dangerous game. He played a still more dangerous one in refusing to take the oath of allegiance to William III; that cost him the archbishopric of Canterbury.

The trial of Sancroft and the other six bishops was watched with anxiety by every clear-thinking person in London; the acquittal caused indescribable scenes of enthusiasm in which, no doubt, both Wren and Evelyn

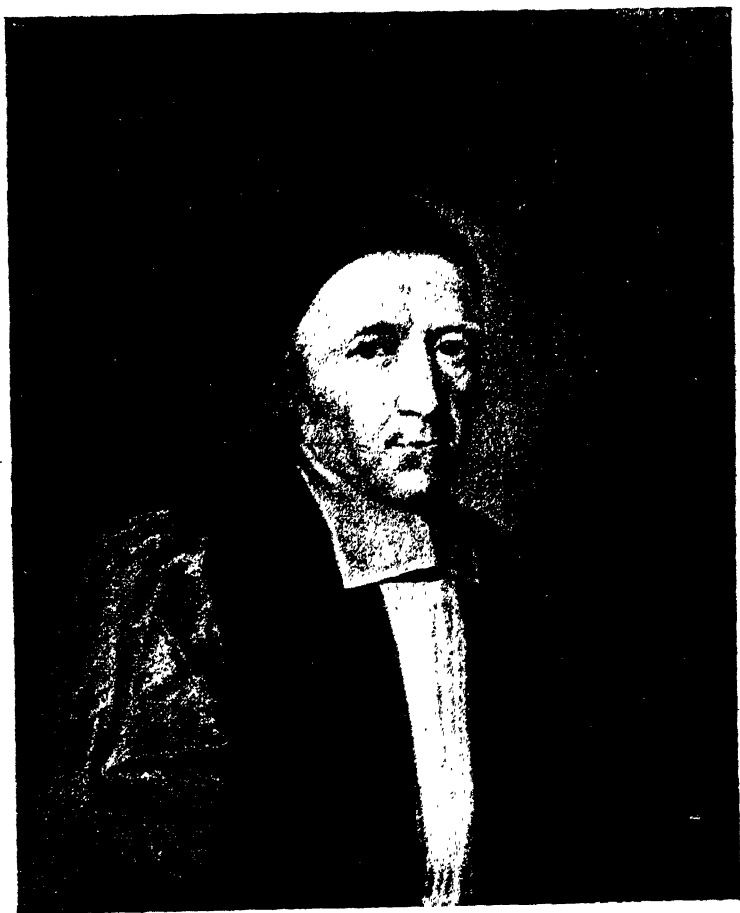
took part. It must be remembered that, at that time, Wren himself was in Parliament. He was member for Plympton. It may have been that James asked him the same question that he asked most M.P.s who were seeking election or re-election: 'Will you vote for the repeal of the Test Act? Will you support the Declaration?' One cannot imagine a Wren being disloyal to the Church of England by voting for the *repeal* of an Act that *forbade* Catholics to take office under the Crown, and if James asked that question of Wren, no doubt he received a direct answer.

At all events (returning to the subject of Sancroft) it is certain that the Dean was very popular in London in 1687. Chronologically speaking, to mention the fact here is still to be ahead of time; it is, however, my intention, as far as possible, to picture the type of men who stood round Wren at this critical point in his career. James II made the mistake of his life when he ordered the Declaration of Indulgence to be read in every church in the land. In London it was read in four churches only, entirely through the influence of the Dean of St. Paul's.

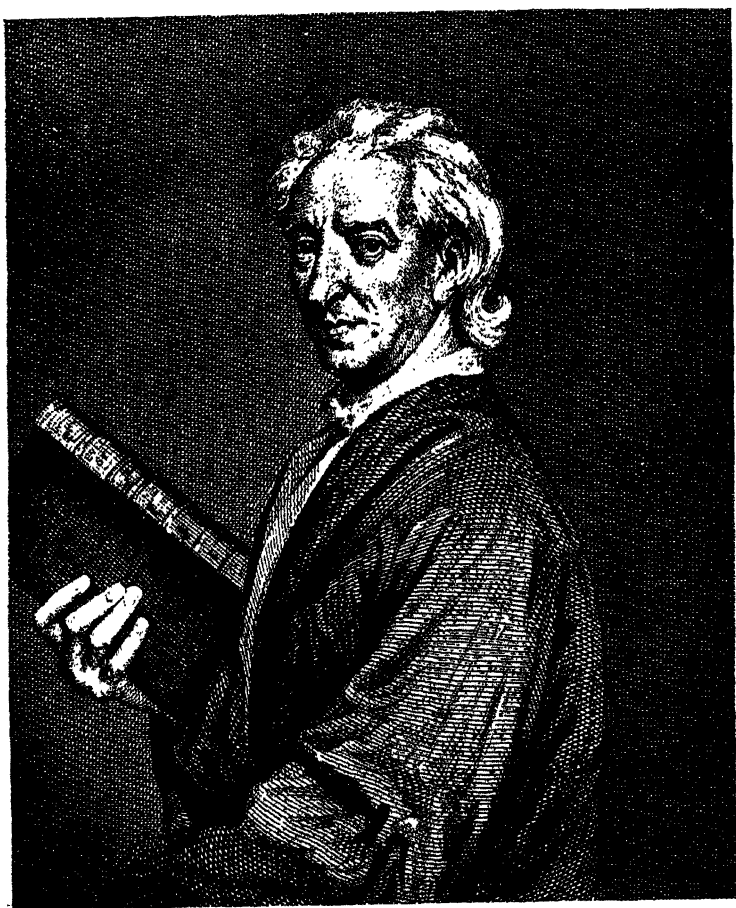
So that Wren must have known, when he came to make his survey, that he had a good friend who would stand by him, or who would be straight and honest in the matter should he find himself at variance over any details regarding the restoration of the cathedral.

Wren prepared his report at once and laid it before the King on May 1. I think I am right in suggesting that there was nothing in it that Evelyn did not know about because he stood by Wren on August 27, when the Commission met at the cathedral to make final decisions. It must be understood that Wren had already made his report on May 1, as stated; it must also be realized that the definite wording of it had been something in the nature of a shock to the Commissioners. I am inclined to think that the meeting Evelyn so closely describes (August 27) was a formal sort of affair, and that some of the members went there to disport their knowledge, or perhaps their ignorance.

I feel, therefore, that it will be more interesting if I



DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S AT THE TIME OF THE FIRE OF LONDON:
DR. WILLIAM SANCROFT
(1617-1693)



JOHN EVELYN, THE NOTED DIARIST
For fifty years Wren's closest friend
(1620-1706)

describe what occurred on the later date, giving excerpts from Wren's report as being his answers to some of the points raised. The whole affair has caused me some mild amusement; it is so like a typical Government inquiry of any age—this included. Obviously Wren was a genius; the Commission must have realized that from the beginning, but it was considered necessary to see that he did not allow his genius to run away with him. Hence the visitation to St. Paul's.

Evelyn begins by saying: 'I went to St. Paule's Church where with Dr. Wren, Mr. Prat, Mr. May, Mr. Thos. Chichley, Mr. Slingsby, the Bishop of London,¹ the Deane of St. Paul's, and several expert workmen, we went about to survey the general decays of that ancient and venerable Church and to set downe in writing the particulars of what was to be don, with the Charge therof.' I cannot refrain from wishing to suggest that the company might have been improved with Mr. Micawber, Mr. Snodgrass, and even Mr. Pickwick himself. The sayings of Slingsby are not recorded, but Chichley and Prat were very wise in their own conceit, a difference of opinion arising when it was pointed out by Wren that some of the pillars were distinctly out of the perpendicular.

Evelyn says: 'Finding the maine building to secede outwards, it was the opinion of Mr. Chichley and Mr. Prat that it had been so built for an effect in perspective in regard to the height, but I was, with Dr. Wren, quite of another judgment.'

It is difficult to appreciate Chichley's and Prat's opinions; it is hardly probable that St. Paul's had purposely been built with a leaning-tower-of-Pisa effect. At any rate, as they could not agree, they 'entered it and plumb'd the uprights in several places.' Evidently Wren and Evelyn proved their point and, doubtless, the good Dean agreed with them. This latter remark is no mere supposition; Sancroft subsequently wrote to Wren in such terms as leave no doubt on the matter.

The next business was to examine the foundation of the

¹ Humfrey Henchman, Bishop of London from 1663 to 1675.

steeple and to see whether it could be used to support a new structure. I imagine that Wren said very little upon this point ; his vision was a dome, not a spire. Nevertheless they climbed up to examine the condition of the tower Chichley and Prat must have been by this time regarded as a thorough nuisance, for they opposed Wren's views right and left.

'It was deliberated,' says Evelyn, 'whether it were not well enough to repair it onely on its old foundation, with reservation to the four pillars ; this Mr. Chichley and Mr. Prat were also for.' Probably their idea was to save expense ; I am inclined to think they were there with the idea that 'Wren is a genius, but we must keep a firm hand over him.'

'But,' says Evelyn, 'we totally rejected it and had a mind to build it with a noble Cupola, a form of church building not as yet known in England, but of wonderful Grace.'

That, of course, gives away the entire scheme. Wren had told Evelyn what he intended to do if he were only allowed, but how far the two of them had persuaded Dean Sancroft at this stage is another matter. Also what the worthy Bishop thought or said is not recorded.

Wren's report had certainly been a trifle startling. He never feared to speak his mind, no matter to whom ; this, however, was perhaps a little outspoken for an architect's report.

'First,' he had written, 'it is evident by the Ruin of the Roof, that the Work was both ill-design'd and ill-Built from the Beginning ; ill-design'd because the Architect gave not Butment enough to counterpoise and resist the Weight of the Roof from spreading the Walls.'

A healthy beginning. Wren must have been amused, if not actually irritated, by Chichley and Prat, who persisted in their view that the defects were not such in reality, but were an artistic intention. At all events, if he but repeated what he had written in his report he should have succeeded in suppressing the gentlemen fairly effectively. 'The Eye alone,' he said, with a touch of satire, 'will

discover to any Man that those Pillars, as vast as they are, even eleven Foot diameter, are bent outwards at least six Inches from their first position ; which being done on both Sides, it necessarily follows that the whole Roof must first open in large and wide Cracks along by the Walls and Windows, and lastly drop down between the yielding Pillars.'

It is evident from this that the total collapse of the roof could only have been a matter of time. On examination of the pillars he found them not all they looked, for he continues : ' This bending of the Pillars was facilitated by their ill-Building ; for they are only cased without, and that with small Stones, not one greater than a Man's Burden ; but within is nothing but a Core of Rubbish-stone, and much Mortar, which easily crushes and yields to the Weight.'

Wren was well aware that however solid-looking a Norman pillar might be, it was simply a shell of stone round a core of rubble, or, as he picturesquely calls it, Rubbish-stone.

' This outward core of Freestone is so much torn with Age and the Neglect of the Roof, that there are few Stones to be found that are not moulder'd and Flaw'd away with Salt-petre that is in them, an incurable disease, which perpetually throws off whatever Coat of Plaister is laid on it.'

Naturally he considered it impossible to repair the roof with the pillars as they were, and suggested one or two other remedies, such as replacing the existing roof with another of timber, or even of a ' lighter shell of stone.' In other words, a fan vault in fifteenth-century style. A further suggestion was a brick vault covered with Stucco, ' which is a harder Plaister that will not fall off with the Drips of a few Winters, but which, to this day, remained firm in many ancient Roman buildings.'

The total height of the original tower and spire was probably about 510 feet from the ground. The fire having destroyed the spire, all that was left was the actual tower, a matter of 260 feet from the ground level. These figures

are given with reserve, as they have been the subject of some amount of controversy. I think it is safe to say that 520 feet (Stow's measurement) for the total height is as high as it could possibly have been; a comparison with the present building is to dwarf the latter, for the cross of St. Paul's now is not much more than 360 feet above the ground.

Wren deals carefully with the Middle Part (crossing) under the tower. He considers it 'most defective, both in Beauty and Firmness, without and within, for the Tower leans manifestly by the settling of one of the ancient Pillars that supported it.' Whether Mr. Prat and his friend Mr. Chichley had anything to say about this statement is not recorded, but Wren's alert technical eye evidently told him that work had already been done in the cathedral to prevent the very ruin that had now come about, for he points out that 'Four new Arches were, therefore, of later Years, incorporated with the old ones which hath straightn'd and hinder'd both the room and the clear View of the Nave, in that Part, whereas it had been more Gracefull to have been wider than the rest.'

These, of course, were the thoughts of a Renaissance mind. An architect devoted to Gothic methods would have cast his eye upwards, to raise wherever possible. Wren's eye swept laterally; horizontal expansion was the breath of life to him.

It is not unnatural, therefore, that (to his way of thinking) the cathedral was too long for its width, although he admitted that it yielded 'a pleasant perspective by the continu'd optical diminution of the Columns, and if it be cut off by Columns ranging within their fellows, the Grace that would be acquir'd by the Length is totally lost.'

Nevertheless, one of the members of the Commission made a suggestion that four auxiliary columns should be built beneath the arches of the tower, but Wren instantly turned down the idea because of the obstruction of the view of the nave.

His written proposals for a conversion of the existing cathedral into a Renaissance building, or as near to it as he

thought wise to suggest at the moment, must have come out in his conversation with the Commissioners on August 27. He wrote: 'I can propose no better remedy than by cutting off the inner corners of the Cross to reduce this Middle Part into a spacious Dome, or Rotundo, with a Cupola (or hemi-spherical roof) and upon the Cupola, for the outward ornament, a Lantern with a Spiring top to rise proportionately, though not to that unnecessary height of the former Spire of Timber and Lead burnt by Lightning.'

There, of course, we get our first glimpse of St. Paul's as it appears at the present time. The question of cost and of reasonable economy was not being overlooked. I suspect that Messrs. Chichley and Prat had been deputed to use their restraining influence in this direction in case Wren should suddenly begin to launch out into expensive schemes, even though he had been given to understand at the outset that so large an undertaking would not, in all probability, be a matter of private enterprise only. Money would flow in, but not to the extent the nature of the work would demand. Not every one could afford £1400—the sum Dean Sancroft eventually subscribed. In the end, as a matter of fact, a tax was placed upon sea-borne coal and the revenue largely devoted to the restoration fund. At the moment, however, economy was considered an essential part of the scheme.

Wren economized in a thoroughly architectural manner. He made his proposals quite clear in his report. 'The material of the old Corners of the Ailes,' he announced, 'will be the Filling Stone for the new Work, for I should not persuade the Tower to be pull'd down at first, but the new Work to be built round it.'

This shows that he had wide ideas for his dome. Also he was thinking of the people. No doubt he shared their sorrow that the spire had never been rebuilt, and even though he hated very tall spires, he could hardly have regarded a tower that had once supported a steeple (and now supported nothing) with anything but artistic disappointment. With the steeple it must have been at least imposing, whatever one's private view may have been of the

style it portrayed ; now it was neither one thing nor the other.

Wren therefore thought it better to leave the tower showing until he could spin his dome round it, so to speak, ' because the Expectations of Persons are to be kept up, for many Unbelievers would bewail the loss of old Paule's steeple and despond if they did not see a hopefull Successor rise in its stead.' Obviously he realized that people of advanced age would not live to see the new dome. It was a kindly thought and thoroughly characteristic of him.

His final and perhaps one of his chief reasons was that to leave the tower as it was would mean less scaffolding. As for Inigo Jones's ' intire and excellent piece,' he decided to leave that, also, as it stood. I cannot avoid thinking that he would have pulled it down in the end, probably waiting until he could rouse sufficient enthusiasm to admit of his undertaking a new portico of his own design.

He certainly realized that the very fact that Jones had faced the outside with large stones meant that a similar restoration of the whole building would, sooner or later, have to take place. He was all for doing the same to the inside, saying that it would be ' easy to perform after a good Roman manner and to follow the Gothic Rudeness of the Old Design.' Evidently he had made up his mind to use large slabs of Portland stone, suitably hewn.

In a P.S. he advocates the use of stucco and has hopes that he will be able to procure good material by sea, at an easy rate, for his ' Plaister.' He also points out that his dome is going to be a deal cheaper than these ' lofty Fabricks,' laying it down as an axiom that the higher the spire the higher the cost.

Altogether it was a somewhat startling report. The conference proved more or less abortive, so far as the King's commissioners were concerned, for Wren stuck to his opinions, backed by Evelyn and the Dean. Wren and Evelyn offered to ' bring in a Plan and Estimate, which after much Contest was at last assented to.' After they had finished their business in the cathedral they repaired ' with

my Lord Bishop to the Deane's,' and there, over a glass of Sancroft's good wine, thoroughly thrashed the matter out.

Estimates of the dimensions of old St. Paul's vary considerably. If John Stow is to be credited—and his *Survey of London*, published in 1598, appears to be carefully written—the extreme length was 690 feet; on the other hand, modern investigation takes about a hundred feet off that measurement. In any case, it was much longer than the present St. Paul's which, from east to west, is only 520 feet in length.

The extreme breadth of old St. Paul's was 104 feet which, as Wren pointed out, was not nearly wide enough. The present building is very much wider; I have given some of its measurements, taken from recent figures, on page 159.

Little did the party, as they went into the deanery on that twenty-seventh day of August, 1666, realize that they might as well not have met at all. As for Wren, he wanted to build, not to restore; perhaps he never wanted anything more in his life. One can imagine him saying to himself: 'I should like to blow the whole thing up and begin again.'

He must have had designs on that portico. It may have been 'intire,' though I doubt if it really was 'excellent' (in that position, at all events), with all due respect to Wren's generous attitude towards it. He must have realized that, however good or bad, *it was not his*. At the best, he would be regarded by posterity as the 'Patcher of Paule's,' rather than as its true architect.

It is an ill wind, indeed, that blows nobody any good. A wind did blow, *only five days later*; it blew from the east, steady and strong, and in the heart of that wind there was a destroying flame of fire. In the early hours of the morning of Sunday, September 2, the Great Fire of London broke out. It was no ill wind, despite the misery it caused, for it cleansed the city from the germs of bubonic plague. It burnt old St. Paul's—at least, as much of it as would burn; it split Inigo Jones's portico so that it was no longer 'intire' nor anything else.

What were Wren's thoughts as he watched the progress of the flames? He must have been filled with horror and

sadness, as was every one else, but his imagination must have caught fire also. As he saw St. Paul's collapse into ruin, with only the great piers and one or two walls left standing, he must have known, deep down in his soul, a secret and pardonable joy. The day would come when a new cathedral—the cathedral of his dreams—would raise its proud head above the smoking ruins of the old 'Gothic Rudeness,' and he, and he alone, would build it.

It was the Fire of London that gave Wren his chance.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON

■

WHATEVER Dean Sancroft's real views may have been about Gothic *versus* Renaissance architecture, he must have said farewell to the little party on that Monday in August, 1666, with a sense of relief. At last something was going to be done for his beloved cathedral. It is quite possible that he imagined he would be Dean of it all his life, and that he might even be spared to take his seat in his stall on the day of consecration. That he had not the slightest thought of ever being raised to the primacy is quite certain; no one was more surprised than he when the news came. His thought, at the moment, was entirely for the safety and dignity of St. Paul's. The days of desecration were over; men at last had come to realize that a church was a sacred place.

He may have had a further talk with Evelyn and Wren during the week. If I may be permitted to invent a possible situation, I should like to think of them sitting in the deanery garden in the cool of the evening on the following Saturday. The day had been hot, and there had been no rain during the previous month. It was September the first, and a glorious sunset had given promise of a fine Sunday, an easterly breeze having made the City pleasant during the late afternoon.

London looked very much the same as it had looked for longer than any of them could remember. It was the London of William Shakespeare, almost exactly as he knew it fifty years previously. Very little had been done to it in the reign of James I; the buildings were chiefly Elizabethan. Perhaps a little more, here and there, during Charles I's time, but it must be remembered that Londoners had suffered

much from the ravages of a plague ; also the civil wars did not tend to assist any building schemes.

This brings us to the time of the Commonwealth when the tendency was rather to destroy than to construct. Anything that was in a degree new at all was very new indeed, and belonged to the reign of Charles II. It was only six years since Evelyn had witnessed the King's return to London ; those six years had seen a few private houses built here and there, but nothing of greater dimensions.

In the days of Charles I it was 'the thing' to live well within the City walls. Pepys was now one of the few men of note who still preferred to remain within the confines of the City ; he lived in Seething Lane, close to the Tower. It is said that Wren lived at 32, Botolph Lane, while he was building St. Paul's and the churches, but there is no real evidence that it was so. He may possibly have taken rooms there in order to be near the scenes of his work, but at this time, when in London at all, he was probably not living in the City.

The building of private houses naturally came about when the King returned because so many nobles and other men of importance to the Stuart monarchy came back with him. Thus it became the fashion to reside outside London rather than in it, especially as many of the nobles found their houses occupied or else in disrepair, and rather than take up residence in their old quarters built themselves homes in the near country.

It would not cost us, in these days, more than a few coppers in 'bus-fares to reach the most distant of these new houses, but in those days St. Giles, for example, was very much in the fields and could be seen from a considerable distance.

Lincoln's Inn offered great attraction, especially for those who were interested in the great building scheme begun by Inigo Jones some years previously. If you liked something with a classic flavour about it you could not have done better than take one of his houses. If you lived in Covent Garden in the days of Christopher Wren you must have been somebody, for houses there were by no

means cheap. You would have had to be quite wealthy to take a house in Henrietta Street, particularly ; only the well-to-do could afford that. The street had been named after the King's own mother.

If you preferred to go further afield still, you might have enjoyed some pleasant country rambles round St. James's, Pall Mall, and Soho. Also there were some very pretty lanes in and around Holborn. A house in Clerkenwell would command an extensive view from its windows ; with any luck at all, you might take your friends up to your bed-chamber and from its northern windows point out places of interest in the further perspective. You would be almost sure to command a good view of the charming little villages of Hampstead and Highgate, where the air was so good owing to the altitude ; while Hackney, well away to the north-east, was by no means amiss in the matter of its residential houses.

In the City itself it was, perhaps, a trifle crowded. Paternoster Row remains a typical street ; it has never altered. Pepys used to go to browse amongst the booksellers there, calling in at one of the hundreds of taverns that abounded in Stuart London. He records how his coach, passing through the slaughter-house district (Shambles), knocked off two pieces of meat into the mud, whereat the butcher became a trifle abusive. It cost the good Samuel a shilling to settle matters, which was *not* to his 'great content.'

The actual dwelling-space in London was totally inadequate ; at least, the London County Council in these days would have condemned it as such. If you were a business man with a family you were forced to include all your apprentices, and perhaps some of your workmen, in your household.

Compared with Liverpool—speaking from the modern point of view—I always consider London quiet ; in those days London was noisier than Liverpool has ever been. The streets were very narrow and were paved with egg-shaped cobbles beaten in with gravel and sand. There were no raised footpaths ; thus a horse and cart might

scrape past your very door at any time, making so much noise on the hard stones that you could scarcely hear yourself speak in your dining-room.

That there was always a risk of fire was no secret. It was often thought that, one day, something serious might happen in that way; but nothing was done, with the exception that it was forbidden to build new houses or shops with overhanging fronts.

London was evidently not without its smoke. Evelyn complains bitterly of it. 'It is this horrid smoke,' he says, 'which obscures our churches and makes our palaces look old, which fouls our clothes and corrupts the waters, so that the very rains and refreshing dews, which fall in the several seasons, precipitate the impure vapour, which with its black and tenacious quality spots and contaminates whatever is exposed to it.' Unless Evelyn is being particularly fussy, it looks as though he had had some experience of a London fog.

Within the Wall, London was decidedly a medieval city. The streets may have been narrow; they may have been noisy; they may have smelt none too pleasant in places, but they were certainly picturesque. The timbered front of Staple Inn has remained to give us an idea of what they looked like. We can walk down Farringdon market and fall to wondering what sort of appearance the hawkers of those days presented, with their baskets stacked beside their stalls. The familiar cry of the Apprentices rather grated on the nerves, one would imagine; it was ever the same: 'What d'ye lack, ladies; what d'ye lack?'

Fires of a minor character were always breaking out, and Charles II warned the Lord Mayor, Recorder, and Aldermen, of the danger to life and property unless something definite were done about the overhanging storeys, especially in the narrower streets. He gave them his authority to pull down any new structures that offended in this manner and to prosecute the builders.

Such was London under the Stuarts. Little did Dean Sancroft think, as he bade farewell to his visitors, that he would not sleep many more nights under the roof of his

deanery. Where he went to may not be known, but it is certain that he must have had to move by the Tuesday night, if not earlier.

Pudding (or, as it once had been, Pudding) Lane was one of the narrowest streets in the lower part of the city, being an outlet to the riverside near London Bridge. An irregular line of wooden houses, in partial disrepair and as dry as sawdust, extended down the hill. The wood was covered with pitch as a preservative. The top storeys overhung so much that you had to walk in the middle of the street to get a view of the sky at all; then you saw a thin streak only, for the houses very nearly met at the top. The sun never penetrated into those miserable dwellings; all that it ever did was to flood the street itself at certain hours of the day. It was a dark, dank street, with an unpleasant smell about it. Carts could pass with difficulty in some parts of it; in others they could not pass at all. A baker's cart was often seen there, for in Pudding Lane lived Farynor, the King's baker. He had a busy day this particular Saturday, and retired at ten o'clock, probably glad that he would not have to be abroad quite so early on Sunday morning, leaving a pile of faggots by the oven ready for lighting the fire as soon as he rose. About twelve o'clock he had occasion to use a candle and, according to his account, there was not enough fire in the oven to light his wooden match.

He also subsequently swore that he drew the oven fire before he went to bed; he further denied that there was any draught that might have fanned a spark into a flame.

Whether this was a fact or not, between midnight and two o'clock a fire broke out in the house, and Farynor's man woke to find his bedroom full of smoke. He roused the baker and his wife immediately, and the former looked out of the window into the yard. There was a pile of brushwood but, he said, not alight. In a few moments the house was blazing. Farynor, his wife, and the assistant climbed on to the roof, jumped for it, and so escaped; the maid-servant, however, feared to take the hazard and was conse-

quently the first victim of the Fire of London ; she was burned to death.

The fire, as a whole, began quite slowly. Farynor's bakery was burning for upwards of an hour before any other building caught alight, and a neighbour collected most of his goods together before his house was affected. The flames rose considerably two hours later, fanned by a fresh easterly breeze. In Fish Street Hill stood the old Star Inn whose outbuildings were full of dry hay ; this soon caught fire and was the real beginning of the disaster.

By eight o'clock London Bridge was blazing, the breeze having again freshened somewhat. The day was bright and sunny with a cloudless sky ; then the wind rose, not exactly to gale force, but enough to cause the flames to roar in a terrifying fashion.

The news must have been remarkably slow in spreading, because it is evident from the writings of William Taswell, later Rector of Newington and also of St. Mary, Bermondsey (but then a boy at Westminster School), that people were actually worshipping in the Abbey in ignorance of what was going on in the lower part of the City.

It seems incredible, but Taswell says that he was standing at 'sermon-time' on the pulpit steps when he noticed a disturbance in the congregation and overheard the word 'fire' being whispered. Boy-like, he scrambled down, made his way out of the Abbey, and ran to Westminster Bridge, from which he obtained a clear view of the City. He was amazed to see the glare of the flames in the sky despite the fact that the sun was shining brilliantly, and also noted fugitives coming along the river, carrying such goods as they had been able to rescue. It seems amazing that the news had not reached Westminster earlier in the morning ; it was by this time past eleven o'clock.

Very soon the excitement became intense, but the crowds came to the unfortunate conclusion that the fire was a deliberate attempt on the part of Frenchmen (or else Dutchmen) to burn London. The Roman Catholics also came in for their share of suspicion ; it was rumoured that they had thrown red-hot balls into houses in the city.

Taswell says : ' A blacksmith in my presence, meeting an innocent Frenchman walking along the street, felled him instantly to the ground with an iron bar. . . . In another place I saw the incensed populace divesting a French painter of all the goods he had in his shop.'

Rumours of all kinds were circulated until nobody knew what to believe. All that was certain was the fire itself, now beginning to assume alarming proportions. The wind increased during the day, and by Monday morning the flames had a solid front of half a mile, travelling up Gracechurch Street, across Eastcheap, along Cannon Street, causing greater destruction than the previous day.

St. Paul's, thus far, had escaped. This fact undoubtedly heartened many of the City dwellers. Taswell says that ' the people round raised their Expectations greatly concerning the absolute Security of that Place upon Account of the immense Thickness of its Walls and its Situation, built on a large Piece of Ground, on every Side remote from Houses. They therefore carried their belongings into the cathedral, and the stationers round about brought their goods and stacked them in the crypt of St. Faith's.' No doubt the Dean threw open both the cathedral and the crypt much as was done in some churches during air raids in the Great War.

Poor wretches ! It availed them little. Taswell says : ' As I stood upon the Bridge, I could not but observe the Progress of the Fire towards the venerable Fabrick. At about eight o'clock it broke out on the top of St. Paul's Church.'

This was the Tuesday night. Evelyn says that ' the Stones of St. Paul's flew like Grenades, the melting Lead running down the Streets in a Stream, the very Pavements glowing with a fiery Redness.' Taswell risked a journey to St. Paul's on Thursday ; the previous day it was not possible to get within two hundred yards of the burning cathedral. He filled his pockets with fragments of bell-metal which had melted in the flames. He says the ground was so hot that he scorched his shoes.

Evelyn was evidently taking no risks ; he left it until

Friday before he ventured to visit St. Paul's. He was dismayed at the sight of the vaulted roof which had fallen in and broken into St. Faith's crypt, setting fire to all the books the stationers had taken down there. The stationery and books burned for a week.

As there is no better account of the fire than that of Pepys, I propose to let him tell his own story by quoting from his diary.

It seems that he had gone to bed on the Saturday night quite early—an uncommon occurrence for him. Some of his maids had sat up later than usual—at least I trust that they did not make a regular practice of going to bed between one and two in the morning. They saw the fire.

Pepys says: 'Jane called us up about three in the morning to tell us of a great fire they saw in the city.' Pepys then got up and calculated that it was 'in Mark Lane at the farthest.' After watching it for a while he decided to go back to bed. 'About seven rose again to dress myself, and there looked out at the window and saw the fire not so much as it was, and farther off.' Probably the daylight—it would be light long before seven on September 2—was responsible for making the fire appear less fierce. At all events, Pepys thought no more about it, and spent the morning working quietly in his study.

'By and by Jane comes and tells me that she hears about three hundred houses have been burnt down.' This was an exaggeration, but it was enough to wake up the worthy Pepys. 'So down, with my heart full of trouble, to the Lieutenant of the Tower of London who tells me that it begun this morning in the King's Baker's house in Pudding Lane, and that it hath burned down St. Magnus' Church and most part of Fish Street already. So I down to the waterside and there got a boat. Poor Michell's house as far as the Old Swan already burned that way.'

Having come to closer quarters he found 'everybody endeavouring to move their goods, and plunging into the river or bringing them into the lighters that lay off; poor

people staying in their houses as long as till the very fire touched them, and then running to the boats, or clambering from one pair of stairs, by the waterside, to another. And among other things, the poor pigeons, I perceive, were loth to leave their houses but hover'd about by the window balconys till they burned their wings and fell down.'

Pepys spent an hour watching the appalling sight and then decided to let the authorities know at Whitehall. 'I to Whitehall and there up to the King's closet and the Chapel, and I did give them an account and dismayed them all, and word was carried in to the King.' So that it was just the same as at Westminster Abbey; evidently no one knew anything of the fire until practically midday.

'So I was called for,' continues Pepys, 'and did tell the King and the Duke of York what I saw and that, unless His Majestie did command houses to be pulled down nothing could stop the fire.' This was actually done, but not effectively until the Tuesday at the earliest.

'They seemed much troubled,' says Pepys, 'and they commanded me to go to My Lord Mayor from him (the King) and command him to spare no houses but to pull down before the fire every way.' Sir Thomas Bludworth (the Mayor) seems to have attempted to carry out the King's commands but with little success, so far as stopping the fire was concerned. His opinion is given in Pepys' next entry. 'Here, meeting with Captain Cooke, I in his coach which he lent me, and Creed with me, to St. Paul's, and there walked along Watling Street as well as I could, every creature coming away loaden with goods to save, and here and there sick people carried away in their beds.'

Pepys found Sir Thomas working hard. 'At last,' he says, 'I met My Lord Mayor in Canning Street [he means Cannon Street] like a man spent, with an handkerchief about his neck. To the King's message he cried: "Lord! What can I do? I am spent; people will not obey me. I have been pulling down houses but the fire overtakes us faster than we can do it."' We can understand his difficulties; even with the King's authority he would make little impression upon the poor wretches, who were nearly

demented at the sight of their homes either blazing or in danger.

I think Pepys might have stayed and done a little to help, but it was always his way to carry out his own programme whatever might or might not be happening in the outside world. So he returned home, as he had guests coming to dinner. 'Mr. Moone' was one of them, and it appears that 'Mr. Moone's design and mine which was to look over my closet, and please him with the sight thereof, which he hath long desired, was wholly disappointed, for we were in great trouble and disturbance at the fire.'

The next sentence is thoroughly characteristic: 'However, we had an extraordinarily good dinner, and as merry as at the time we could be.' It would take more than a Fire of London to put Samuel Pepys off a good dinner.

Evidently he was anxious to find out how the fire had progressed, because 'Soon as dined, I and Moone away and walked through the City, the streets full of nothing but people. We parted at Paul's, he home and I to Paul's Wharf where I had appointed a boat to meet me. Met with the King and the Duke of York in their barge and with them to Queenhithe.'

The mention of Queenhithe does not signify much to us in these days, but then it constituted half the Port of London. 'The River full of Lighters and boats carrying goods, and good goods swimming about in the water. Having seen as much as I could now, I away to White Hall, by appointment, and then walked to St. James's Park, and there met my wife and Creed, and Wood and his wife, and walked to my boat, and there upon the water again and to the fire, up and down, it still increasing and the wind great. So near the fire as we could for Smoak, and all over the Thames with one's face in the wind you were almost burned with a shower of firedrops.'

They were evidently out sight-seeing, but 'when we could endure no more upon the water we to a little ale-house on the Bankside, over against the Three Cranes, and there staid till it was dark and saw the fire glow, and in the corners and upon steeples, and between Churches and

houses, as far as we could see up the hill of the City, in a most horrid, malicious, bloody flame, not like the flame of an ordinary fire.'

'Barbary and her husband away before us. We staid, it still being darkish, and saw the fire as only one entire arch from this to the other side of the Bridge, and in a bow up the hill for an arch of above a mile long; it made me weep to see it.'

At length, overcome with sadness, they watched 'the Churches, houses, and all on fire and flaming at once.'

They then returned home 'with a sad heart, and there find everybody talking and lamenting the fire, and poor Tom Hater come with some few of his goods saved out of his house which was burned upon Fish Street Hill. I invited him to lie at my house and did receive his goods, but was deceived in his lying there, the news coming every moment of the growth of the fire, so as we were forced to begin to pack up our own goods and prepare for their removal and did (it being moonshine and warm weather) carry much of my goods into the garden, and Mr. Hater and I did remove my money and iron chests into my cellar, in thinking that the safest place.'

Pepys was by now seriously alarmed for the safety of his house in Seething Lane. 'About four o'clock this (Monday) morning my Lady Batten sent me a cart to carry away all my money and plate and best things. To Sir W. Rider's at Bednall Greene, which I did, riding myself in my night-gown in the cart; and Lord! to see how the streets and the highways are crowded with people running and riding and getting of carts at any rate to fetch away things.'

His entry for Tuesday, the 4th, shows that the King's commands had been carried into effect. 'Now begins the practice of blowing up of the houses in Tower Street, those next the Tower which at first did frighten people more than anything, but it stopped the fire where it was done, it bringing down the houses to the ground in the same places they stood in, and then it was easy to quench what little fire was in it.'

On the Wednesday Pepys tells us that he 'lay down in the Office again upon W. Hewer's Quilt, being mighty weary and sore in my feet with going till I was hardly able to stand. About two in the morning my wife calls me up and tells me of new cryes of fire, it being come up to Barking which is at the bottom of our Lane. I up, and finding it so, resolved presently to take her away, and did, and took my gold (about £2350) to Hewer and Jane, down by Pounding's boat to Woolwich; but Lord! what a sight it was by moonlight to see the whole City, almost, on fire that you might see it as plain at Woolwich as if you were by it.'

Having safely landed at Woolwich, 'To Mr. Sheldon's where I locked up my gold, charged my wife and Mr. Hewer never to leave the room without one of them in it, night or day. So back again, by the way seeing my goods well in the lighters at Deptford, and Home, and whereas I expected to have seen our house on fire, it being now about seven o'clock, it was not. But to the fire, and there find greater hopes than I expected, for my confidence of finding our Office on fire was such that I durst not ask any body how it was with us, till I come and saw it was not burned.'

Pepys was fortunate, seemingly. He describes how he climbed to the top of Barking Church Steeple and viewed the landscape but, being nervous, 'down again as fast as I could.' 'The Exchange was completely gutted; Fenchurch Street, Gracious Street [Gracechurch Street] and Lombard Street in dust.'

He continues to describe his experiences, and testifies to the fact that profiteering in times of difficulty did not begin in our time. He went 'to Moorefields, our feet ready to burn walking thro' the town amongst the hot Coles, and find that full of people and poor wretches carrying their goods; a great blessing it is to them that it is fair weather for them to keep abroad day and night. Drunk there, *and paid 2d. for a plain penny loaf.*' The italics are mine.

On Friday morning Pepys was up by five o'clock and 'Blessed be God! find all well, and by water to Pane's Wharf.' He is a bit muddled here—excitement, probably;

he means Paul's Wharf. Anyhow, he 'walk'd there and saw all the towne burned and a miserable sight of Paul's Church with all the roofs fallen, and the body of the Quire, fallen into St. Faith's. Paul's School; also Ludgate and Fleet Street.' He then descended upon his friend Creed, borrowed a shirt, and had a good wash.

By this time—in fact, by Thursday morning—only a sixth part of the City of London was left standing; the liberties towards Temple Bar were burnt out and at least a hundred thousand people were rendered homeless. The actual casualties were, however, negligible; not more than a round dozen lost their lives. The area destroyed within the City itself was roughly three hundred and seventy acres; outside the City it amounted to a little over sixty-three acres.

Besides the Guildhall and St. Paul's, eighty-four parishes suffered the loss of their churches; the loss of private property amounted to thirteen thousand houses at least. The livery companies lost forty-four of their halls. The City gates were consumed; also the Royal Exchange, while Leadenhall was the only market that escaped. Every jail was razed to the ground; the Inner Temple likewise, except for the hall, the church, and a portion of Fig Tree Tower; also the gateway into Fleet Street perished.

Most of the wharves, landing-stages, and even some of the boats had to be included when the reckoning of the general damage was undertaken. Estimates of this naturally vary considerably, but it may be safely accepted that it was in the neighbourhood of ten millions sterling—a sum that could not be represented in these days by less than five times that amount. The fire finished in the Cripplegate district after having burned solidly for four days and four nights.

Unfortunately Wren left no diary from which we might have learned something about his activities during that awful week. A mind like his, ever active, ever inventive, could not have failed to be deeply impressed and saddened at the actual calamity; but it also could not have failed to

begin a reconstruction of London while he himself witnessed its destruction.

I imagine him climbing up to some point of vantage in the ruins of St. Paul's and taking a good look round him. Shocked as he would be as his eye fell on familiar details—those he had liked and those he had disliked—the next second he would half close his eyes and see the new cathedral standing there as plainly as we see it now.

The creative mind is affected by the smallest details of impression, and his was one of the greatest creative minds ever known. To invent, to him, was no more difficult than to accept or reject what others had invented. I imagine him looking at what remained of the vast piers of St. Paul's and saying to himself, 'Those will take some razing but they will make excellent filling-stone, or perhaps do for some of the parish churches.'

I seem to see him solemnly regarding the mess in Ludgate Hill with his technical eye, and beginning to make plans for a newer and better thoroughfare than medieval London had ever known. His knowledge of the City must have been complete; he could almost have drawn a map of it blindfold. Knowing what had disappeared in the fire he must have thought out, in his customary quick manner, how he would plan it afresh if he were only given the chance. He may have thought of Prat and Chichley; he may even have encountered them and facetiously suggested that it did not matter now whether the tower was out of the perpendicular or not. No doubt he sympathized with Dean Sancroft in the loss of his deanery; for all we know he may have offered him hospitality in his own home.

This, of course, is mere supposition; there is so little recorded that it is impossible to give solid facts. That Wren acted with the utmost promptitude regarding the rebuilding of London is a fact; both he and Evelyn submitted plans within a few days.

There is nothing that I can see which can be called opportunism in their actions. Evelyn may be dismissed as an exceedingly clever amateur at town planning, but Wren had a position to uphold and a duty to execute. He

was Deputy-Surveyor and likely to assume the Surveyorship before very long ; it was obviously his duty to be prepared with something definite in the way of reconstruction.

That he *was* ready with something very definite is yet to be related ; at the moment it is enough to suggest that his was probably the most active mind in London. While Pepys was still congratulating himself on his lucky escape, both at his home and at his office, paying his customary visits to My Lord This and Sir W. That, Wren was hard at work for the public good. Whether he ascribed the cause of the fire to the actions of foreign incendiaries scarcely matters ; it is probable that he concluded that it was accidental. Devout and deeply religious, he may have seen in it the work of a cleansing Hand ; that he fully realized what was expected of him is certain.

It is also certain that he was in constant contact with the King during this time. Charles had done much to make himself popular these last few days ; he had been everywhere, generally riding on horseback. His presence, his calm dignity and superb courage, had been an example to all. Whatever may be said against the Stuart Kings—and, of course, there is a great deal—we can never accuse them of forgetting that the first gentleman in the land was bound to exercise a great influence over the masses. The Court of Charles II was a scandal and a blot on Stuart history ; the personality of the King in times such as these was something to admire.

And there we leave the scene of desolation and misery : timber still smouldering everywhere, masonry still falling at odd intervals, the streets blocked at every turn, heart-broken men and weeping women still seeking to recover any treasure that had escaped the fury of the flames. There was no fire insurance in those days ; the loss was indeed a dead one. For a year or more London was a place of ruin ; the process of rebuilding it was slow and laborious. Such a fire could never occur in these days ; when we look at some parts of our great metropolis as it is to-day, we may be forgiven for wishing that it could.

The poverty it caused was appalling. The whole city smouldered in ashes for a month, for the weather continued hot and dry. Wooden sheds and rough shelters of all kinds were hastily thrown up wherever there was a space sufficiently large for the purpose. Those who were fortunate enough to secure vacant houses in outlying districts paid £150 for dwellings normally commanding a rent of £40. The poor had to pay from three to four pounds a chaldron for coal—a chaldron being a little over twenty-five hundredweight of our measurement.

Colliers in the Thames were accused of purposely delaying the arrival of cargoes of coal in order to extort high payments. Indeed, profiteering all round seems to have been rife.

Pepys says that the winter of 1666-7 was the coldest ever remembered and that the suffering of the still homeless poor was too dreadful to contemplate.

The fire swept away all traces of the plague and the City began to be a healthier place, but the conflagration of London was without parallel in the history of the world; nothing approached it in horror since the days when Nero played his fiddle and watched the burning of Rome.

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CHAPTER IX
SURVEYOR-GENERAL

HARDLY had the fire spent itself—so far, that is, as the actual blazing was concerned, for it smouldered (according to Taswell) for four months—than both Wren and Evelyn, quite unbeknown to each other, commenced planning New London. Within a week Evelyn completed his plan and sought an early opportunity—September 13, as a matter of actual fact, a week precisely from the day the fire was beaten out—of visiting the King.

Evelyn's enthusiasm was characteristic of him; he no doubt felt there was an opportunity for him to be of real service to Charles who evidently received him sympathetically. It must have been something of a blow to learn from the King that Wren had presented a design a day or two previously; but Evelyn's sweet nature showed itself very plainly in a letter to Sir Samuel Tuke in which he mentioned the fact that he had seen the King, but had found that 'Dr. Wren had got the Start of me.' Far from being irritated or displeased, Evelyn merely remarked that 'Both of us did coincide so frequently that His Majesty is not displeased.'

The King told Evelyn that, on the whole, he preferred Wren's plan, but pointed out a few details in Evelyn's that he liked better, and suggested modifying Wren's to agree with it. Neither of these plans, unfortunately, was adopted. When I look at the manner in which the City was eventually rebuilt, I feel that, at whatever sacrifice to those whose homes and places of business were destroyed, Charles, Wren, and Evelyn ought to have held out and carried the plan into effect.

The project failed from two causes: first, the expense, which would have certainly been colossal; secondly, those

who had suffered loss quite naturally asked that their homes and offices should be re-erected on their old sites.

If ever, in the whole history of this London of ours, there was a time when public sentiment should have been sacrificed for the lasting good of the nation, it was in that month of September, 1666. Wren certainly did study the citizens by offering to rebuild many of the public buildings on their old sites, whereas Evelyn was a little more inclined to cast sentiment aside for the sake of idealism.

To record the details of Wren's stupendous plan is, to me, somewhat saddening, for it is truly a record of *What-might-have-been*, of *What-ought-to-have-been*. Do you care to take a walk with him, in your imagination, through his New City—assuredly to have been the Eternal City?

May I suggest you have met him at Ludgate Circus? Then raise your eyes and gaze in wonderment at his magnificent Triumphal Arch in honour of his King. Stand central for a moment and look up Ludgate Hill in order to get a clear view of the western elevation of the cathedral, and notice how the street clears the extremities; it is ninety feet wide under the arch, and it opens—trumpet-shaped—in order to make this possible. Before you mount the hill, let the vision fade, and admire the present railway-bridge—if you can!

If you accompany Wren up Ludgate you will find two straight roads north and south of the cathedral. The former leads to the Royal Exchange which you will find standing nobly in a huge piazza. You will need to spend a few moments here, for you will count ten streets radiating from this piazza. Three of them lead to the river, the central one taking you to London Bridge. Looking eastward, you ought to see one of the City gates; it will be Aldgate, as a matter of fact, and Wren will have already pointed out the trees and bushes of Tower Hill in the distance on the southern side.

Cheapside, you will have already noticed, has been re-aligned, and your road to Newgate is as straight as a die. Your companion may possibly remark that, as the crow flies, so the *wren* follows!

You turn south once more. 'What has become of Thames Street?' you ask. 'Ah!' says Wren, 'I have done away with it; but how do you like my forty-foot Quay and the public walk? It goes as far as Temple Gardens. You will see I have built some of the Companies' Halls on the river terrace; the others are round the Guildhall—where they should be! Those deep-water bays are for the barges at Bridewell Dock. You will realize that I have made access to the river a simple matter, and not without dignity.

'Now let us return to the Royal Exchange,' says Wren. 'You will notice my two roads running west; that one goes straight to the Guildhall. I have also cut a useful road from Newgate to the river, *via* Ludgate; it eventually comes out at Blackfriars. There is another, from Cripplegate, right across the heart of the City, to Queenhithe; a third runs from Moorgate, *via* the Royal Exchange and on southwards; a fourth from Bishopsgate.

'Finally, let us return to Ludgate. You will see that my piazza has eight streets radiating from it. I have made them ninety feet wide where I can, the lesser widths being sixty and thirty feet respectively. Thirty feet is the least I allow; they are merely lanes. That canal (from the Thames) runs under Holborn Bridge, and you will appreciate that I have banished all offensive trades and those that make much use of fire.'

Wren might have experienced difficulty in getting New Fleet Street into alignment with St. Paul's as it bends to the left past St. Dunstan's, which the fire did not attack. The plan came to nothing, however, so that it does not signify very much.

It was a magnificent scheme. That he would have altered it, modified, or added to it, is only natural; it was his way. The plan he submitted had a freshness about it merely because it was thought out in a moment of inspiration. Shoe Lane, one of the narrowest streets off Fleet Street, would have been roughly the site of his largest piazza. So that to walk down past Temple Bar would have been a thrilling experience, for you would have crossed

this magnificent piazza with the arch at Ludgate in full view ; hardly had you grasped its beauties than you would have caught sight of St. Paul's in the further perspective.

The double system of roads would, in many cases, have been ideal in these days of congested traffic ; one-way streets would indeed have been excellent in effect, and it might have been possible to travel by omnibus during the busy hours of the day at a speed that would make it worth while. It was a visionary scheme ; had it been adopted, London City would have been the finest in the world—truly a modern Ephesus.

As Wren planned it in that week, it contained faults that have frequently been pointed out since. It has even been stated, with what truth I cannot say, that he drew up his plans from a faulty ordnance-map. Even if it were true, it is inconceivable that he would not have corrected the errors or have made a map for himself later on, when he came to put his plans into execution.

The description I have given of Wren's ideas are based upon contemporary matter and also upon critical writings since his time. As I have found them all at variance and inclined to differ on quite important points, I have been forced to take the general consensus of opinion in some instances, and to make a choice, in others, where I have found considerable discrepancies.

I have done this unhesitatingly because, in any event, it is only possible to give a very general idea of Wren's intentions, and I do not see the force of arguing about any of the details because he would probably have altered most of them. My object here is to establish the fact that an opportunity arose, *and was missed*, and that *we* are the losers. If Wren had had his way, London would have been a City of open spaces instead of being one of irregular, narrow, and crooked streets ; it would have been the chief of any seven wonders of the modern world.

Disappointed though he must assuredly have been,

Wren viewed the matter in his usual calm, philosophic manner and assumed the post of Surveyor-General much in the same way as he had assumed the Gresham and Savillian Professorships.

Sir John Denham, the retiring Surveyor, had recently suffered from domestic worry. A year previously he had married for the second time—an action that proved disastrous. It appears that his wife was a young girl of eighteen, by way of being a noted beauty. She was the daughter of Sir William Brooke. A scandal arose shortly after the marriage, when it became known that she was the Duke of York's mistress.

The disgrace of the whole affair unhinged the Surveyor's mind. Nor was this all. While he was recovering his mentality his wife died suddenly, poisoned by a cup of chocolate; at least, it was so believed at the time. The Duchess of York was suspected by many of Denham's friends, but the general opinion was that Denham himself was guilty. As a post-mortem examination revealed no sign of poison in the body of Lady Denham, the whole affair was more or less hushed up. Sir John lived for another two years, dying at his home in Whitehall in 1669.

As has been pointed out, Denham was hopeless as an architect, but as a poet he had distinct merits. Dryden gave it as his opinion that the poem *Cooper's Hill*, describing the Thames scenery round the Surveyor's home at Egham, was 'the exact standard of good writing.' Evelyn also was a great admirer of Denham's poems, but scarcely of his powers as a designer. Wren and Denham were always good friends, and it is quite certain that the former regretted the sad circumstances that surrounded his chief's retirement.

Naturally, one of Wren's duties as Surveyor-General was to make a complete survey of St. Paul's after the fire, as his former report now carried very little weight. This second report is so interesting, and so fine a specimen of the delightful way Wren had of expressing himself, that I quote it as it stands:

SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN'S ACCOUNT OF THE STATE
OF ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL AFTER THE
FIRE OF LONDON, 1666.

' What Time and Weather had left entire in the old, and Art in the new repair's parts of the great Pile of S. Pauls, the late Calamities of the Fire hath so weakened and defac'd that it now appears like some Antique Ruine of 2000 years continuance ; and to repaire it sufficiently will be like the mending of the Argo-navis, scarce anything will at last be left of the old.

' The first Decaies of it were great from severall Causes. First, from the original Building itself. For it was not well shap'd or design'd for the firm bearing of its owne Vault, how massy soever the Walls seem'd to be (as I formerly show'd in another Paper) nor were the Materialls good ; for it seem'd to have been built out of the Stone of some other antient Ruines, the Walls being of 2 severall sorts of Freestone, and those small ; and the Coar within was Raggstone, cast in rough with Mortar and Putty, which is not a durable way of Building, unless there had been that peculiar sort of Banding with some thorowe Courses, which is necessary in this kind of Filling Work, but was omitted in this Fabrick. This Accusation belongs chiefly to the West, North, and South Parts. The Quire was of later and better worke, not inferiour to most Gothick Fabricks of that Age. The Tower, though it had the effects of an ill manner of building, and small stones and filling work, yet it was more carefully Banded and cramped with much Iron.

' A second reason of the Decaies, which appeared before the last Fire, was in probabilitie the former Fire, which consum'd the whole Roof in the Reign of Q. Elizabeth. The fall of Timber then upon the Vault, was certainly one maine cause of the Cracks which appear'd in the Vault, and of the spreading out of the Walls above 10 inches, in some places, from their true Perpendicular, as it now appears more manifestly. The giving out of the Walls was endeavour'd to be corrected by the Artist of the last Repaires

(*i.e.* *Inigo Jones*), who plac'd his new case of Portland Stone truly perpendicular, and if he had proceeded with casing it within, the whole had been tolerably corrected. But now, even the New work is gone away from its Perpendicular, allso by this second fall of the Roofe in this last Fire. This is most manifest in the North West Isle.

' The second Ruines are they that have put the Restauration past Remedy, the effect of which I shall briefly enumerate :

' First, the Portick is totally depriv'd of that excellent beauty and strength which Time alone and Weather could have no more overthrown than the naturall Rocks, so great and good were the materials and so skilfully were they lay'd after a true Roman manner. But so impatient is the Portland Stone of fire, than many Tonns of Stone are scaled off and the Columns flaw'd quite through.

' Next, the south west corner of one of the vast Pillars of the body of the Church, with all it supported, is fallen. All along the body of the Church the Pillars are more given out than they were before the Fire, and more flaw'd towards the bottome by the burning of the Goods belowe and the Timber fallen.

' This further spreading of the Pillars within hath also carried out the Walls of the Isles, and reduc'd the circular Ribbs of the Vaults of the Isles to be of a Form which to the eye appears distorted, and compress'd, especially in the north west Isle of the Body of the Church.

' The Tower, and the parts next about it, have suffered at least by reason that the Walls, lying in form of a Cross, give a firm and immoveable Buttment each to the other, and they stand still in their position and support their Vaults, which shews manifestly that the fall of the Timber alone could not break the Vaults, unless where the same concussion had force enough to make the Walls allso give out.

' And this is the reason of the great Desolacion which appears in the new Quire, for there the falling Vaults, in spite of all the small Buttresses, hath broken them short or deslocated the stouter of them, and, overthrowing the

North Walls and Pillars and consequently the Vaults of the North East Isle, hath broken open the Vaults of St. Faith's (though those were of very great strength), but irresistible in the force of so many 1000 Tonns, augmented by the height of the Fall.

' Having shown in part the deplorable Condicioun of our Patient, we are to consult the Cure if possibly Art may effect it. And herein we must imitate the Physitian, who, when he finds a totall decay of Nature, bends his skill to a Palliation, to give Respite for a better settlement of the Estate of the Patient. The question is then Where best to begin this kind of practise, that is to make a Quire for present use.

' It will worst of all be effected in the New Quire, for there the Walls and Pillars, being fallen, it will cost a large sume to restore them to their former Height, and, before this can be effected, the very substruction and Repaire of St. Faith's will cost so much that I shall but fright this Age with the Computacion of that which is to be done in the Darke, before anything will appear for the Use desired.

' The old Quire seems to some a convenient Place and that which will be the most easily affected, because the Vault there lookes firme or easily reparable as far as to the Place where was once the Old Pulpit. But the Designe will not be without very materiall Objections. First, the place is very short, and the little between the stone Skreen and the Breach is only capable of a little Quire, not of an Auditory.

' And if the Auditory be made without, yet, Secondly, all the adjacent places are under the Ruines of a fallen Tower, which every day throws off smaller Scales, and in Frosts will yield such showers of the outside Stones (if no greater parts come downe with the Tempests) that the new Roofs (yet to be made) will be broken if no further mischiefs ensue. Thirdly, you are to make such a dismall Procession through the Ruines to come thither that the very passage will be a Penance. Fourthly, this cannot be effected without considerable expense of making of partition walls to the topp to sever this part on every side from the Ruines, and covering with Timber and Lead these 4 short

parts of the Cross next the Tower, and covering the Tower also, that is, if you make Room for the Auditory as well as the Quire, the Quire itself being very little.

‘ These waies being found inconvenient and expensfull, either of taking out a part, where the old Quire was, or where the new Quire is, with the parts west, north, and south next the Tower as far as the Vaults stand ; it remains that we seek it in the Body of the Church. And this is that which I should humbly advise as the properest and cheapest way of making a sufficient Quire and Auditory after this manner.

‘ I would take the Lesser North and South doors for the Entrances and leaving two Intercolumniations Eastward and 3 or 4 Westward, I would there make particion Walls of the fallen stone upon the place. The last part above the Doores may be contriv’d into a Quire, the West into an Auditory. I would lay a Timber Roof as low as the botoms of the upper Windows with a flat fretted Ceiling. The Lead saved out of the burning will more than cover it. Of Iron and Pavement there is several for all Uses. The Roof lying low, will not appear above the Walls, and since we cannot mende this great Ruine we will not disfigure it, but that it shall have its full motive to work, if possible, upon this or the next Ages ; and yet within it shall all convenience and Light (by turning the second storey of arches into Windows) and a beauty desirable to the next two Centuries of years, and yet prove so cheap that between three or four thousand pounds shall effect it in one summer.

‘ And having with this ease obtained a present Cathedra, there will be time to consider of a more durable and notable Fabrick, to be made in the Tower and Eastern parts of the Church, where the minds of men, now contracted to many Objects of necessary charge, shall by God’s blessing be more widened, after a happy Restauration, both of the Buildings and Wealth of the City and Nation. In the meanwhile to derive, if not a stream, yet some little drills of Charitie this way, or at least to preserve that already obtained from being diverted, it may not prove ill advised to seem to begin something of this new Fabrick. But

confess this cannot be put in Execution without taking downe all that part of the Ruines which whether it be yet seasonable to do, we must leave to our Superiours.'

Could anything be more sane and sensible than this report? Every line in it seems to say: 'I will patch it if you wish, but you will not like the result, and a new building will *have* to be erected sooner or later. If you take my advice you will let me take down the 'Ruines,' save what stone I can, and build afresh.'

The report was given consideration, with the result that the cheaper method was accepted. In an order, dated from Whitehall January 15, 1667, it was 'order'd that a Choir and Auditory for present Use be set out, repair'd and finish'd in the Course of next Summer in the Body of the Church, between the West End and the second Pillars above the little North and South Doores.'

The order was for repairs all through, rather than for a complete rebuilding. Wren's disappointment must have been great. He had pointed out, before the fire, that the cathedral was in a hopeless condition; when the fire came he must have planned a new St. Paul's in his own mind as quickly as he planned a new London. Was he to be deprived of the opportunity of putting either plan into execution?

Then he must have revisited the building and contemplated the appalling mess everywhere with a sad heart. On the other hand, he may have been encouraged as he looked further still into the condition of the ruin, knowing that it would be useless to attempt to restore it, and that he might yet live to build it anew.

I can imagine him talking it over with Evelyn; that he went to Dean Sancroft and told him that the Commission was making a very serious mistake is a fact, though not actually recorded. Sancroft himself proves this, as will be shown later. For the moment let us contemplate the fallen cathedral as best we can, sympathizing with Wren in his task of clearing away the rubbish. Well we may, for there were 47,000 cartloads of it!

How he contrived to do so makes an interesting story, to be related in the proper place, which is not here, for Wren busied himself in other directions. Arguing over the cathedral in the to-be-or-not-to-be sense was not enough to occupy him now, nor at any other time. He was particularly active at the Royal Society at this period.

And not without reason. He had taken stock of those enormous piers that supported the great tower and steeple of St. Paul's. Unfortunately, from his point of view, even the Fire of London had failed to demolish these, and Wren began thinking out the advisability of using gunpowder as a means of bringing them down. He submitted some ideas to the Society for discussion on February 6, 1667.

The Society gave up its rooms at Gresham College to the Mayor and Corporation as they were without a suitable place in which to transact their business. John Evelyn approached his friend Henry Howard, afterwards created Duke of Norfolk, and secured the use of Arundel House, near the Temple. Although the Society appreciated Evelyn's action and Howard's kindness, it was found that there was nowhere really suitable for a laboratory.

Wren, by this time, was back in Oxford, hard at work on his astronomy lectures. He received a letter from the Society asking him to meet Howard, who happened to be in Oxford, with a view to the construction of a suitable building for scientific research. Lack of funds, however, prevented the scheme materializing.

In 1668 Wren was again in London, reading papers to the Royal Society on astronomical subjects, and also looking after the building of the new Guildhall, the Royal Exchange, and the Custom House. These buildings have been destroyed since, and therefore do not interest us; they must have taken some of his attention at the time, notwithstanding.

Even so, he must have returned to Oxford during March to superintend the erection of a chapel for Emmanuel College, a commission obtained for him by Dean Sancroft after correspondence with Dr. Breton who had recently succeeded the Dean as Master of the College. The letters

from Breton to Sancroft are entertaining and worth reproducing.

Writing on January 25, 1667, Breton says :

‘ This whole Society joynes with me in thanks to be given to you for your care concerning the modell of our Chapell.’

He doubts whether they will be able to lay the foundations that year (1667) ‘ as we did intend, the unexpected troubles have raised the price of lime to be double what it was a month since.’ The unexpected troubles referred to were, of course, those caused by the victory of the Dutch at the mouth of the Thames.

Breton thereupon went to Northamptonshire to inspect some quarries where he was fortunate enough to secure stone at a smaller cost. He wrote a letter to Sancroft on his return in which he paid a pleasant tribute to Wren. The letter is as follows :

‘ Dr. Wren hath sent me a very civill Ansure of the Letter you was pleased to send him from me ; he sayth that it is possible he may be in London by Mid-Lent and that he may then make a Start to come here, but desires I would not delay one day in Expectation of him. Truly, Sir, though I am in some Readiness to begin, I will stay many days rather than want his Advise upon the Place. His Presence will be a great Reputation (besides other Advantages) to the whole Work. Give me Leave to ask earnestly of you to use your Power, which I know is great, to procure it.’

The original design of Emmanuel College Chapel is still preserved at All Souls. It differs in many respects from what Wren actually built, but it was ever the Surveyor’s way to modify his designs at the last moment—a matter to be dwelt on later, in the chapter on the building of St. Paul’s.

It was about this time that Wren, although more than occupied with the work already mentioned, was asked to go to Salisbury to survey the cathedral. He acquiesced, as usual, though he cannot have been particularly pleased to leave Oxford in order to work on a Gothic building. The

care with which he reported on the condition of Salisbury Cathedral gives an idea of the trouble he went to over all his commissions. The report is as follows :

‘ The whole Pile is large and magnificent, and may be justly accounted one of the best Patterns of Architecture in that Age wherein it was built.

‘ The Figure of it is a Cross, upon the Intersection of which stands a Tower and Spire of Stone, as high from the Foundation as the whole length of the Navis, or Body of the Church ; it is founded only upon the four Pillars and Arches of the Intersection.

‘ Between the Steple and the East-end is another crossing of the Navis, which on the West-side only wants its Ailes ; all other Sides of the main Body and the Crosses are supported on Pillars with Ailes annexed, and buttressed without the Ailes, from whence arise Bows, or flying Buttresses, to the Walls of the Navis which are concealed within the Timber Roof of the Ailes.

‘ The Roof is almost as sharp as an Equilateral Trangle, made of small Timber after the ancient Manner without principal Rafters ; but the Wall-plats are double, and tied together with Couples above forty Feet long.

‘ The whole Church is vaulted with chalk between Arches and Cross-springers only, after the ancients Manner, without Orbs and Tracery, excepting under the Tower, where the Springers divide, and represent a wider sort of Tracery ; and this appears to me to have been a later work and to be done by some other Hand than that of the first Architect, whose Judgment I must justly commend for many Things, beyond what I find in Divers Gothick Fabricks of later Date, which, tho’ more elaborate with nice and small Works, yet want the natural Beauty which arises from the Proportion of the first Dimensions. For here the Breadth to the Height of the Navis, and both to the shape of the Ailes bear a good Proportion.

‘ The Pillars and Intercolumniations (or spaces between Pillar and Pillar) are well suited to the Height of the Arches, the Mouldings are decently mixed with large Planes without an Affectation for filling every Corner with Ornaments,

which, unless they are admirably good, glut the Eye as much, as in Musick, too much Division the Ears.¹

‘ The Windows are not made too great, nor yet the Light obstructed with many mullions and Transomes of Tracery-work, which was the ill fashion of the next following Age : our Artist knew better, that nothing could add Beauty to Light, he trusted to a stately and rich plainness that his Marble Shafts gave to his Work : I cannot call them Pillars because they are so small and slender and generally bear Nothing, but are only added for Ornament to the Outside of the great Pillars, and decently fastened with brass.

‘ Notwithstanding this Commendation of the Architect, there are some Original Errors which I must lay to his Charge, the Discovery of which will give us Light to the Cause of the present Decays.

‘ First, I must accuse Him, that building on a low and marshy Soil, he did not take sufficient care of the Foundation especially under the Pillars. That Foundation which will bear a Wall, will not bear a Pillar, for Pillars thrust themselves into the Earth and force open the solid Ground if the Foundation under them be not broad ; and if it be not Hard Stone it will be ground and crushed as Things are bruised in a Mortar, if the Weight be great.

‘ A second Fault was the not raising the Floor of the Church above the Fear of Inundations ; many sufficient Foundations have failed after the Earth hath been too much drenched with unusual Floods ; besides, it is unhandsome to *descend* into a Place.

‘ The third Fault is the Poise of the Building ; generally the Substructions are too slender for the Weights above.

‘ The Pillars appear Small enough and yet they shew much greater than they are ; for the Shafts of Marble that encompass them seem to fill out the Pillars to a Proportionable Bulk ; but indeed they bear little or no Weight, and some of those that are pressed, break and Split ; if those Ornaments should be taken off the Pillar would then appear too little for its Burthen, but this no where so enormous

¹ This remark amuses me ; I doubt whether (had he heard them) he would have shared my profound veneration for J. S. Bach’s Organ Fugues !

as under the Steeple, which being four hundred Feet in Height, is borne by four Pillars, not much larger than the Pillars of the Ailes : and therefore not out of Fear to overburden them in the Inside of the Tower, for Forty Feet High above, the Navis is made with a slender hollow Work of Pillars and Arches ; nor hath it any Buttresses, and the Spire itself is but seven Inches thick, tho' the Height be above one hundred and fifty Feet.

' This Work of Pillars and Arches within the Tower makes me believe that the Architect laid his first Floor of Timber forty Feet Higher than the Vault beneath (which, as I said, was since added) and without doubt intended a Belfry above (as appears by places left in the Walls for Timber, and fastening of the Frames for the Bells) and so would have concluded with a Tower only, without a Spire.

' And this addition of a Spire was a second Thought, the Artist is more excusable for having omitted Buttresses to the Tower ; and his ingenuity commendable for supplying this Defect by bracing the Walls together with many large bands of iron within and without, keyed together with much Industry and Exactness : and besides these that appear, I have Reason to believe that there are Divers other Braces concealed within the thickness of the Walls ; and these are so essential to the Standing of the Work, that if they were dissolv'd, the Spire would spread open the Walls of the Tower, nor could it stand one Minute.

' But this way of tying Walls together with Iron, instead of making them of that substance and Form that they shall naturally poise themselves upon their Butment is against the Rules of good Architecture ; not only because it is corruptible by Rust but because it is fallacious, having unequal veins in the metal, some pieces in the same bar being three Times stronger than the other, and yet all sound to Appearance. I shall not impute to our Artist those Errors which were generally the mistakes of Builders in that Age ; yet it will not be amiss to insist a little upon those which seem to concern us and to occasion some of the Infirmities in our Buildings.

‘Almost all the Cathedrals of the Gothick Form are weak and defective in the Poise of the Vault of the Ailes ; as for the vault of the Navis, both sides are equally supported, and propped up from the spreading by the Bows, or flying Buttresses, but inwardly they have no other Stay but the Pillars themselves, which, (as they are usually proportioned) if they stood alone without the Weight above, could not resist the spreading of the Ailes one minute.

‘ True indeed, the great Load above the Walls and Vaults of the Navis, should seem to confirm the Pillars in their perpendicular station, that there should be no need of the Butment inward, but Experience hath shewn to the contrary, and there is scarce any Gothick Cathedral, that I have seen, at home or abroad, wherein I have not observ’d the Pillars to yield and bend inwards from the Weight and the Vault of the Aile ; but this defect is most conspicuous upon the Angular Pillars of the Cross, for there, not only the vaults want Butment but also the angular Arches that rest upon that Pillar, and therefore conspire to thrust it inward towards the Center of the Cross and this is very apparent in the Fabrick we treat of : for this Reason, this Form of Churches has been rejected by Modern Architects abroad, who use the better and Roman Art of Architecture.’

This last sentence plainly shows how Wren honestly disapproved of Gothic methods. The question he raises about tying Walls together with iron must be viewed as an expression of opinion in 1669, not in 1710. Had he been asked to survey Salisbury Cathedral in the latter year, after having had the experience of building his own cathedral, he might not have written quite so definitely. The very fact that he himself was compelled to use iron, in spite of its tendency to rust, had disastrous results in St. Paul’s, as we shall see later.

On the other hand, his views about it being against the rules of good architecture, in my opinion, still stand. Wren was restricted by the judgment of others when it came to building St. Paul’s ; consequently he found the very faults he had previously pointed out at Salisbury were occurring in a modified form in his own work.

To build 'after the good Roman manner' needs complete freedom from restriction; no architect—even as great as Christopher Wren—could build without fear of settlements if ordered to use up old material, especially that which had been scorched by fire.

Those writers who are not admirers of Renaissance buildings in general, nor of Wren in particular, have taken the opportunity to point out that what he preached at Salisbury he failed to practise in London. Considering he had a long and hard fight to dissuade the King and the Commission from insisting upon a mere patching-up of old St. Paul's, it is something to be wondered at that he contrived to build so mighty a pile without being forced to commit architectural blunders of almost every kind.

To execute a design in true classic style, building solidly throughout and on perfect foundations, was indeed a costly proceeding in Wren's time; for that matter, it has been costly in any age or period. It certainly does not bear restriction. Unfortunately, St. Paul's was built under very great restriction.

To compare St. Paul's with notable fabrics of great antiquity is, in a sense, hard on Wren; yet, in another sense, it is not so inasmuch as the comparison of handicapped conditions in building is so greatly in Wren's favour. The greatest temple ever erected was that begun in Ephesus by Chersiphron—the Temple of Diana of the Ephesians.

I cannot more vividly describe the Artemision than by translating a passage from Pliny. He says:

'The Temple of the Ephesian Diana is a work of truly admirable magnificence, which was raised at the joint expense of all Asia, and occupied two hundred and twenty years in the building. It was placed on a marsh, that it should not be endangered by earthquakes or cleavings of the ground. Again, that the foundations of such a pile might not be laid on a sliding and unstable foundation, they laid a bed of charcoal (*carbonibus*) over which they placed fleeces of wool. The total length of the Temple is 425 (Greek) feet, the width 220. It has one hundred and twenty columns, seven the gift of a king, and 60 feet in height;

of these thirty-six are ornamented, one by Scopas. Chersiphron the Architect, directed the works.'¹

It hardly needs pointing out that the conditions here were vastly different. Money was to be had as required, one would imagine, considering a whole continent subscribed to pay for the temple; moreover, time was no object. Wren was grumbled at because he took thirty-five years to complete St. Paul's; the builders of the Artemision allowed themselves the leisure of over two centuries.

Wren was forced to wait, often enough, for his stone to arrive by sea from Portland; even then it came in small quantities. Chersiphron had the quarries of Mount Pion at his command and an army of men to move the marble wherever he required it.

Although in actual measurement the Artemision was smaller than St. Paul's (Greek feet, by the way, are more than English feet) I am of opinion that it may have been heavier, even though it possessed no dome.² The peristyle of 120 enormous columns account for this in part, but the foundations (according to Pliny and others) went down to a great depth and were of solid blocks of stone; also the walls were much thicker. Even if I am wrong in this supposition, I think it is reasonable to point to a very different chain of circumstances.

Here were perfect conditions for building; the Temple of Diana would have lasted until now but for the fact that it was destroyed by the Scythians in the sixth century. There would never have been a question of tying anything with iron; neither would there have been with Wren if he had been allowed to build exactly as he wished and with-

¹ The following is the original which I have thus translated: 'Magnificentiae vera admiratio extat templum Ephesiae Dianae, ducentis viginti annis factum a tota Asia. In solo id palustri fecere, ne terrae motus sentiret, aut hiatus timeret. Rursus, ne in lubrico atque instabili fundamenta tantæ molis locarentur, calcatis ea substravere carbonibus, de invelleribus lanæ. Universo templo longitudo est ccccxxv pedum, latitudo ducentorum viginti, columnæ centum viginti, septem a regibus factæ, lx pedum altitudine: ex iis xxxvi cælata, una a Scopæ. Operi præfuit Chersiphron Architectus.'

² A Greek foot is 1.0133 English feet.

out restrictions of any kind. Scopas, by the way, was the Grinling Gibbons of the period.

The fact that the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's were, in 1925, served with a Dangerous Structure Notice was sufficient for the critics of St. Paul's. Wren was quoted as having said something about architecture and Eternity, and two hundred years was pointed to as being considerably less than Eternity ; but the answer is as I have given it. The faults were those of condition and circumstance.

We are now approaching the period of Wren's life when St. Paul's became his chief thought. We have seen what his opinion was regarding the 'venerable Fabrick' both before the Fire and after it ; it is now time to relate exactly what happened as a result of those expressions of opinion. Before proceeding with an account of the work that now faced Wren on the summit of Ludgate Hill, it will be interesting and convenient if we go ahead of time a little in order to make the acquaintance of some of the Surveyor's Master-workmen.

On February 19, 1671, Wren dined with Evelyn and Pepys in Dover Street. After dinner Evelyn interested Wren and Pepys in a piece of wood-carving by a young man of Dutch origin, named Grinling Gibbons. Evelyn mentioned that he had already spoken to the King about this young man, and began to relate how he came in contact with him. It appears that he was walking towards his home at Sayes Court, Deptford, when he chanced to look through the window of what he described as a poor, solitary, thatched house.

In a tiny room a young man was bending over some wood-carving. Evelyn became curious, and looked intently at the subject of the carving, which he could see quite plainly. It was evidently based upon Tintoretto's famous representation of the Crucifixion. Evelyn had always been a profound admirer of the Venetian painter of the sixteenth century, and had actually purchased a copy of this identical work in Venice some twenty-five years previously. Hence his quickness in identifying the subject that was being carved before his very eyes, most exquisitely, in wood.

Evelyn thought for a moment and then decided to knock at the door. He shall tell the rest of the story in his own words :

‘ I asked if I might enter ; he opened the door civilly to me, and I saw him about such work as for the curiosity of handling, drawing, and studious exactness, I had never before seene in all my travells. I questioned him why he worked in such an obscure and lonesome place ; he told me it was that he might apply himself to his profession without interruption, and wondered not a little how I had found him out. I asked him if he was unwilling to be made knowne to some great man, for I believed it might turn to his profit ; he answer’d that he was yet a beginner, but would not be sorry to sell off that piece ; on demanding the price he said £100. In good earnest, the very frame was worth the money, there being nothing in nature so tender and delicate as the flowers and festoons about it, and yet the worke was very strong ; in the piece were more than 100 figures of men, etc. I found he was likewise musical, and very civil, sober, and discrete in his discourse. There was only an old woman in the house. So desiring leave to visite him sometimes, I went away. Of this young artist, together with my manner of finding him out, I acquainted the King and begg’d that he would give me leave to bring him and his worke to White-hall, for that I would adventure my reputation with his Majestie that he had never seene anything approach it, and that he would be exceedingly pleased, and employ him. The King said he would himselfe go to see him. This was the first notice his Majestie ever had of Mr. Gibbon.’

A further entry in Evelyn’s diary carries on the story :

‘ I caused Mr. Gibbon to bring to White-hall his excellent piece of carving, where being come, I advertis’d his Majestie, who ask’d me where it was ; I told him in Sir Richard Browne’s (my father-in-law) chamber, and that if it pleased his Majestie to appoint whither it should be brought, being large and, tho’ of wood, heavy, I would take care for it. ‘ No,’ says the King. ‘ Shew me the way ; I’ll go to Sir Richard’s chamber,’ which he immediately did, walking

along the entries after me. No sooner was he enter'd and cast his eys on the work, but he was astonished at the curiositie of it, and having consider'd it a long time and discours'd with Mr. Gibbon, whom I brought to kisse his hand, he commanded that it should be immediately carried to the Queene's side to shew her. It was carried up to her bed-chamber, where she and the King looked on and admired it againe; the King being call'd away, left us with the Queene, believing she would have bought it, it being a crucifix; but when his Majesty was gon, a French peddling woman, one Mad. de Boord, who us'd to bring petticoates and fanns, and baubles out of France to the Ladys, began to find fault with severall things in the worke, which she understood no more than an asse or a monkey, so as in a kind of indignation, I caused the person who brought it to carry it back to the chamber, finding the Queene so much govern'd by an ignorant French woman, and this incomparable artist had his labour onely for his paines, which not a little displeas'd me, and he was faine to send it downe to his cottage againe.'

Evelyn was evidently disgusted at the outcome of the affair, but he was as good as his word to Gibbons. He did not allow the King to forget him and, above all, introduced him to Wren. This is the Grinling Gibbons whose carving is now so famous; the above is the story of how he was discovered by the good Evelyn. Not all that is attributed to Gibbons in the churches may be actually his; on the other hand, there is no doubt about a good deal of it.

Then there was the Strong family, of Little Barrington, in Gloucestershire, who possessed quarries of their own at Taynton, in Oxfordshire. Thomas Strong is generally thought to have laid the foundation-stone of the cathedral on June 21, 1675. Six years later he died, and Edward, his brother, succeeded him. He was the Surveyor's Master-mason right to the very end, dying less than three weeks before Wren himself.

It is impossible to pass over the great Tijou, Wren's chief worker-in-iron. He was French by birth and, according to contemporary account, was distinguished by 'a

strongly marked face with a heavy moustache, but forbidding expression.' He also worked with Wren for many years, but died soon after the opening of St. Paul's. He was succeeded by Thomas Robinson, whose work in the two western chapels, and the railings of two of the quarter-domes in St. Paul's, are of excellent design.

Carvers-in-stone were Francis Bird, responsible for the pediment of the west front of the cathedral, and Caius Gabriel Cibber, father of the celebrated poet Colley Cibber who was so intimately connected with Handel.

Another carver-in-wood was Jonathan Maine. He was responsible for much of the carving in the western chapels, and also in the cathedral library.

Finally, there was Philip Wood, another carver *in* wood. Wren discovered him in a strange manner. It appears that Wood imagined that he could carve and that he frequently went to St. Paul's churchyard to watch the men at work. One day he plucked up sufficient courage to ask for employment as a carver, but was told that 'we want no hedge carpenters here.'

He still continued his visits to the cathedral, and about a week later, he relates, a 'gentleman approached with papers in his hand and talked with the workpeople. At last his eye fell on me, and he said to the foreman: "What does that young man want? I will not have any persons about here unless they have business." The foreman answered: "Please you, Sir Christopher, he is a country fellow who continually troubles us to give him some of the carving work to do."'

The 'gentleman' beckoned Wood. 'Friend,' he said, with his usual courtesy, 'you want carving work? What have you been used to carve?' This rather destroyed poor Wood's nerve; he must have surprised Wren by murmuring something to the effect that he had carved some *troughs*.

'Troughs?' said Wren. 'Then carve me, as a specimen of your skill, a sow and some pigs; it will be something in your line,' he added, with a touch of mischief. 'Bring it to me this day week.'

The workmen burst into loud laughter in which Wren probably joined, but Wood went back to his lodgings and

burst into tears at the thought of having made such a fool of himself. His landlady sought to comfort him, urging him to do as he was asked by Sir Christopher. The lad thereupon spent his last pound on a block of pear wood and set to work.

The week soon passed, and the sow and pigs duly appeared. Wood arrived at St. Paul's on the appointed day, but the foreman recognized him and forbade him to enter. This time, however, Philip determined to see the Surveyor. It proved to be a wait of some hours, but eventually he espied Wren with a party of well-dressed people. The instant the young man made move the foreman interfered, but Wren's eagle eye was immediately upon him.

'Come here!' Philip bowed, undid his landlady's apron, in which his precious carving was hidden, bowed again, and handed the model to the Surveyor. Wren looked at it carefully. Then: 'I engage you, young man; attend at my office to-morrow forenoon.' The next moment the Surveyor moved away, taking the model of the sow and pigs. After proceeding a few yards he turned round and called: '*Wait until we pass back!*'

Wood waited. On his return with the party, Wren said: 'Mr. Addison here would like to keep your carving and requests me to give you ten guineas for it. I fear,' continued the Surveyor, with his charming smile, 'that I did you some injustice, young man; but a great national work is entrusted to my care, and it is my solemn duty to mind that no part of it falls into inefficient hands.'

Still another insight into a great man's character. Wren remembered that he had caused a laugh at the lad's expense; now that he realized his skill as a craftsman, he willingly engaged him, but not without first of all apologizing for his levity. Philip Wood—need it be said?—ultimately became one of Wren's most devoted servants.

These, then, were some of the men who stood round the Surveyor-General, and who thought there was no one in the world like him. The story is not yet finished; we shall see, later, how one of England's truest gentlemen defended the workmen who served him so well when others, less honest and less refined, falsely accused them for his sake.

CHAPTER X

DEAN SANCROFT WRITES SOME LETTERS

OWING to pressure of work in various directions, Wren did not remain in London personally to superintend such clearing of debris as was necessary at St. Paul's. Fragments of the building still remained standing, nearly all of which had to be propped up for safety's sake, while others, more dangerous, had to be taken down.

Wren therefore contented himself with giving general directions to his subordinates, deciding that as nothing could be done until the site was tolerably clear he might as well go back to Oxford while he had the chance ; later, he knew, he would be compelled to spend most of his time at the cathedral. Whether any one connected with the building staff was keeping in touch with him by letter seems to be doubtful ; letters, in those days, took time to travel.

Wren cannot have been very greatly surprised, and was probably considerably heartened at receiving a pleasant epistle from Dean Sancroft, dated April 25, 1668, which reached him early in May.

'What you whisper'd in my Ear at your last coming hither,' wrote the Dean, 'is now come to pass. Our Work at the West-end of St. Paul's is fallen about our Ears.'

This sentence, to my mind, proves my contention that Wren had previously seen the Dean, and had told him definitely that the Commissioners were making a mistake in attempting restoration.

'Your quick Eye,' continued Sancroft, 'discern'd the Walls and Pillars gone off from their Perpendiculars, and I believe other Defects too, which are now expos'd to every common Observer.'

'About a Week since, we being at Work about the third Pillar from the West-end on the South side, which we had

new cased with Stone where it was most defective, almost up to the Chapitre, a great Weight, falling from the high Wall, so disabled the Vaulting of the Side-aisle by it, that it threatened sudden Ruine so visibly that the Workmen presently remov'd; and the next night the whole Pillar fell, and carry'd Scaffolds and all to the very Ground.'

This looks as though operations had commenced without Wren being present, perhaps even without his having been advised. On the other hand, it may have been that he left directions for the early work, and that he intended to put in an appearance when a little progress had been made. At all events, the Dean goes on:

'The second Pillar (which you know is bigger than the rest) stands now alone, with an enormous Weight on the Topp of it; which we cannot hope should stand long, and yet dare not venture to take it down.'

This was indeed an S.O.S. It would seem that no one knew how to deal with what was certainly a very unpleasant situation. The Dean evidently possessed considerable knowledge of architecture, for he gives very clear reasons for what he has discovered in his next paragraph:

'This Breach has discover'd, to all that look on it, two grave defects in Inigo Jones's Work; one, that his new case of stone in the upper Walls (massy as it is) was not set upon the upright of the Pillars, but upon the core of the Groins of the Vaulting: the other, that there was no Key-stones at all to tie it to the old Work; and all this being very heavy with Roman Ornaments on the Top of it, and being already so far gone outward, cannot possibly stand long. In fine, it is the Opinion of all Men, that we can proceed no farther at the West-end. What we are to do next is the Present Deliberation, in which you are so absolutely and indispensably necessary to us that we can do nothing, resolve on nothing, without you.

'Tis therefore, that in My Lord of Canterbury's Name and by his Order (already, I suppose, intimated to you by the Dean of Christ-Church) we most earnestly desire your Presence and Assistance with all possible Speed.

'You will think fit, I know, to bring with you those excellent Draughts and Designs you formerly favour'd us with ; and in the mean Time, till we enjoy you here, consider what to advise that may be for the Satisfaction of his Majesty and the Whole Nation ; an Obligation so great and so publick that it must be acknowledg'd by better Hands than those of—Your very affectionate Friend and Servant,
W. SANCROFT.'

In his answer, Wren expressed satisfaction that there would be 'noe meddling with the old worke,' which he advised to be used 'as you would use a quarry.' He fears there will not be enough money to 'erect any more such huge Piles,' but hopes for some 'neate Fabrick which shall recompence in Art and Beauty what it wants in bulke.' He was wrong about the money, as Dean Sancroft's reply suggests :

'Yesterday my Lords of Canterbury, London, and Oxford, met on purpose to hear your Letter read once more, and to consider what is now to be done in order to the Repairs of St. Paul's. They unanimously resolv'd, that it is fit immediately to attempt something, and that without you they cannot do.

'I am therefore commanded to give you an Invitation hither, in his Grace's Name and the rest of the Commissioners, with all Speed ; that we may prepare something to be propos'd to his Majesty (the Design of such a Quire, at least, as may be a congruous Part of a greater and more magnificent Work to follow), and then for the procuring Contributions to defray this, we are so sanguine as not to doubt of it if we could but once resolve what we would do and what it would cost.

'So that the only Part of your Letter we demurr to is the Method you propound of declaring first what Money we would bestow, and then designing something just of that Expence ; for, quite otherwise, the Way of their Lordships resolved upon is to frame a Design handsome and noble, and suitable to all the Ends of it, and to the Reputation

of the City and the Nation, and to take it for granted that Money will be had to accomplish it; or however, to let it lie by till we have before us a prospect of so much as may reasonably encourage us to begin.

Thus far I thought good to prepare you for what will be said to you when you come, that you may not be surprised with it; and if my Summons prevail not, My Lord the Bishop of Oxford hath undertaken to give it you warmer, *ore tenus*, the next Week, when he intends to be with you, if at least you be not come towards us before he arrives, which would be a very agreeable Surprise to us all, and especially to—Your very affectionate humble Servant,
 ‘W. SANCROFT.’

I think this the more charming letter of the two; some of its expressions strike me as being strangely modern in wording.

Wren arrived in London a little later, bringing his plans with him. He met the Dean and the Bishops, the question being discussed from all points of view with the idea of presenting some definite plan to King Charles, whose interest in St. Paul's had never diminished.

I propose to leave the matter at that point for the moment, in order to give what few details (now chronologically due) are available concerning Wren's domestic life. There is very little to recount, as a matter of fact, but that which has come down to us can hardly be omitted.

At the end of the year following that which I have just reviewed—namely, on December 7, 1669—Wren married Faith, daughter of Sir John Coghill of Bletchington, Oxford. Possibly he may have met her at the Rectory, the home of his married sister, Susan Holder. Practically nothing is known of Faith Coghill herself, but one letter of Wren's—a love letter—has survived, very charming in expression.

It appears that Faith dropped her watch into water—the sea, probably, as Wren refers to a ‘briny bath’; at any rate, it went into water of some kind, and she gave

it to her lover so that he could have it repaired. This he did, and returned it with the following words :

‘MADAM,—The artificer having never before mett with a drowned Watch, like an ignorant physician has been soe long about the cure that he hath made me very unquiet that your commands should be soe long deferred ; however, I have sent the Watch at last and envie the felicity of it, that it should be soe neer your Side, and soe often enjoy your Eye, and be consulted by you how your Time shall passe while you employ your Hand in your excellent Workes.

‘But have a care of it, for I put such a Spell into it that every Beating of the Ballance will tell you ’tis the Pulse of my Heart which labours as much to serve you, and more Trewly than the Watch ; for the Watch, I believe, will sometimes lie, and sometimes perhaps be idle and unwilling to goe, having received soe much injury by being drenched in that briny Bath, that I dispair it should ever be a Trew Servant to you more.

‘But as for me (unless you drown me too in my Teares) you may be confident that I shall never cease to be—Your most affectionate, humble servant,

‘CHRISTOPHER WREN.’

One has the feeling on reading the above that good manners (and breeding generally) were a feature of the Stuart days ; this letter is typical of Wren, whose courtesy never failed to attract all who came into contact with him.

Very little is known of his married life. There were two sons of the marriage : Gilbert, who died as a baby, and Christopher, born on February 18, 1675.

Christopher Wren *filis* survived his father. He drew up a sort of chronology of the Surveyor’s life and works ; unfortunately, it is incomplete and none too accurate. It is preserved among the Lansdowne Manuscripts. Christopher also collected materials, facts (and a few fallacies) for the family records—the *Parentalia* already referred to—which his own son Stephen (born May 14, 1722) published in 1750.

The Surveyor lost his wife in September 1675, a few months after the birth of Christopher, having enjoyed a married life of only six years. The following year he married Jane FitzWilliams, daughter of Lord Lifford. There were two children by this marriage—Jane, born in 1677, and William, in 1679.

Jane was devoted to her father and he to her; it has been said that the idea of the Gothic spire of St. Dunstan's-in-the-East was originally hers. She died twenty years before him, and was buried in the crypt of St. Paul's; an inscription, paying a charming tribute to her character and musical abilities, may there be read. Of the two sons, Christopher seems to have been the favourite with his father.

The second Lady Wren died in 1679, the year of William's birth. So that, out of ninety years, Sir Christopher Wren spent nine in married bliss, his first marriage being of six years' duration and the second only three.

He was now, by the way, *Sir* Christopher Wren. The year of his Knighthood is generally given as 1672—by some, 1673.

In the Sloane Collection in the British Museum there is a letter written by Christopher Wren, junior, to Ward, author of *Lives of Gresham College Professors*, in reply to an inquiry on his part for the date of Wren's elevation to Knighthood.

Christopher, of course, was not born when his father was thus honoured, but stated, in answer to Ward's question: 'I have no account of the exact time when he was knighted. In the Royal Commission for building St. Paul's, dated November 12, 1673, he is still Doctor of Laws. A warrant signed by Lord Arlington, signifying his Majesty's pleasure, dated February 18, 1674, is directed to "Sir Christopher Wren, Kt.," so there can be little or no mistake to assign the time to the year 1674.' Why other dates have been given, in the face of what Wren's son has stated, I cannot say.

The Surveyor's honours had been many: Bachelor of

Arts in the University of Oxford at nineteen ; Master of Arts and Fellow of All Souls at twenty-one ; Gresham Professor of Astronomy at twenty-four ; Savillian Professor of Astronomy at Oxford, and Doctor of Laws in the Universities of Oxford *and* Cambridge at twenty-nine ; Deputy-Surveyor of the King's Works at thirty ; Surveyor-General at thirty-four ; Knight of the Realm at forty-two ; President of the Royal Society at forty-eight.

It appears, also, that he was mentioned in the charter of the Royal Society as 'Christopher Wren, *Doctor in Medicine*, Saville Professor of Astronomy in our University of Oxford.'

Rare has it been, in any age, for men to have so qualified. The builder of St. Paul's Cathedral, fifty churches, and an amazing number of large secular buildings, was surely *more* than qualified for his work ; the further we look into that work the further we realize what the power of true scholarship really is. It was at least something in Wren's life to have been sought out as being 'absolutely and indispensably necessary' ; it was a far greater thing to have been admired less for his skill, even, than for 'the sweetness of his disposition.'

Such were the characteristics of the man who was now asked by his King to submit designs for London's cathedral. We shall see how he began with a design—the very dream of his life ; we shall see it cast aside and others with it ; we shall eventually see how he met all criticisms, but also how he lived to see every stone of the cathedral in its place. He will be forty years older by the time that has happened, but age, with him, seems to have been a relative term. Christopher Wren never read the words of Benjamin Franklin :

'Dost thou love Life ? Then do not squander time,
for, that is the stuff life is made of,'

but he would have endorsed such a sentiment. To him there would not have been time enough in Eternity itself—unless he made solemn use of every moment of it.

CHAPTER XI

THE DESIGNS FOR ST. PAUL'S

MAINLY for the sake of keeping to as strict a chronology as the circumstances of Wren's life permit, the reader must here be asked to return to the year 1668 in order to appreciate the true order of events. We left Dean Sancroft and the Bishops studying the Surveyor's reply to their invitation, and also keenly looking forward to his arrival in London.

Sancroft had warned Wren of the likely trend of the discussion when at last they should meet, and it is evident from the rest of his letter that the main idea was to build a new choir for purposes of worship at an early date, and to follow on with the rest of the cathedral as soon as funds permitted.

Wren was to show them what he thought should be built, and they were to find the money. That, baldly put, was the situation. There was to be no question of an entirely new building. Neither is there any record of what Wren himself thought would be the outcome of their deliberations. Nevertheless, I feel in my own mind that he intended to pursue the theme to the furthest limits before finally giving in.

After all, he was 'one up' (if I may be permitted a vulgarity) as far as matters had gone. He told them not to attempt to restore; they had held to their own view; they had begun operations and the ruins had fallen about their ears.

In order to obtain any sort of view of the situation as it was at this juncture, we must examine the King's Warrant, which not only shows that something was prepared 'to be propos'd to his Majesty,' but also indicates that Wren had made a decided step forward. The only snare seemed

to be that the King still clung to the notion that much of the old material could be used.

The Warrant for the work specified was thus set forth :

' Whereas, upon strict Survey and Examination of the Ruines of the Cathedrall Church of S. Paul, London, by knowing and experienced Artists, it is found that the Walls now standing are in all Parts so decayed by the late Fire that they are judged altogether insufficient for bearing another Roof or any new Work, it is our express Will and Pleasure that immediate Care be had for taking downe the Walls and clearing the ground to the Foundation of the East End, the old Quire, and the Tower, in such Manner as shall be judged sufficient to make room for a new Quire, of a faire and decent Fabrick, neare upon the old Foundations ; and also that Care be taken of the Cornishes, Astlers, and such parts of the Former towards the West as shall be deem'd usefull for the new Fabrick, lest they be spoil'd by the Fall of more of the Walls which seeme to threaten immediate Ruine. And for so doing this shall be your Warrant. Given at our Court at Whitehall, the 25th day of July 1668.'

The Warrant is quite clear in meaning ; it is what one would have expected after reading Dean Sancroft's letters. Whether work really proceeded immediately seems doubtful—at least, so far as actual construction goes. That Wren took down the pillar with the 'enormous Weight on the Topp of it' goes without saying, but the fact that a supplementary Warrant was issued—even though not until 1673—seems to point to the fact that much time was spent in haggling over various designs Wren submitted. How many of these there actually were will probably never be known.

The new Warrant gives us a better view of the trend of events. It is now agreed that 'no Part of the Ancient Walls or Structures can with any Safety be relied upon or left standing, insomuch that it is now become absolutely necessary totally to demolish and raze to the ground all the relicks of the former Buildings, and in the same Place, but upon new Foundations, to erect a new Church.'

I imagine that Wren must have read that section of the Warrant with some satisfaction; I see him underlining words here and there. *Totally to demolish . . . upon new foundations to erect a new church* might well have been amongst them.

A further statement in the Warrant is equally definite. 'We have caused several Designs to that Purpose to be prepared by Dr. Christopher Wren, Surveyor-General of all our Works and Buildings, which We have seen, and one of which We do more especially approve, and have commanded a model thereof to be made after so large and exact a manner that it may remain as a perpetual unchangeable Rule and Direction for the Conduct of the whole Work.'

The King evidently decided to regard the model as being exactly what Wren intended to build. The description 'perpetual *unchangeable* Rule' is important inasmuch as, in the end, nothing was anything approaching 'unchangeable.' For the moment, however, we must regard the King's wishes as having an air of finality about them; whatever was passed had to be.

Thus we come to the first Model Design, whose main feature was a Greek, not a Latin Cross. There was to be a large dome resting on eight piers surrounded by an ambulatory of eight lesser domes. It was not unlike the first design for St. Peter's, Rome.

That Wren had made up his mind, from the very beginning, to replace the great spire of old St. Paul's with a dome of his own devising hardly needs pointing out again; it is evident from his first report, made before the Fire, that he did not intend to build to the former height unless absolutely compelled.

Apparently the Authorities had overcome any tendencies they may at first have had to insist upon a tower and spire, the more so because Wren had explained that if the famous Paul's Cross Sermons were, in future, to be preached inside the cathedral and not outside, there must be room for a 'vast auditory.' A dome, he told them, was the only sensible solution to the problem and that the sooner they

gave up the idea of a nave screened off from the choir the better.

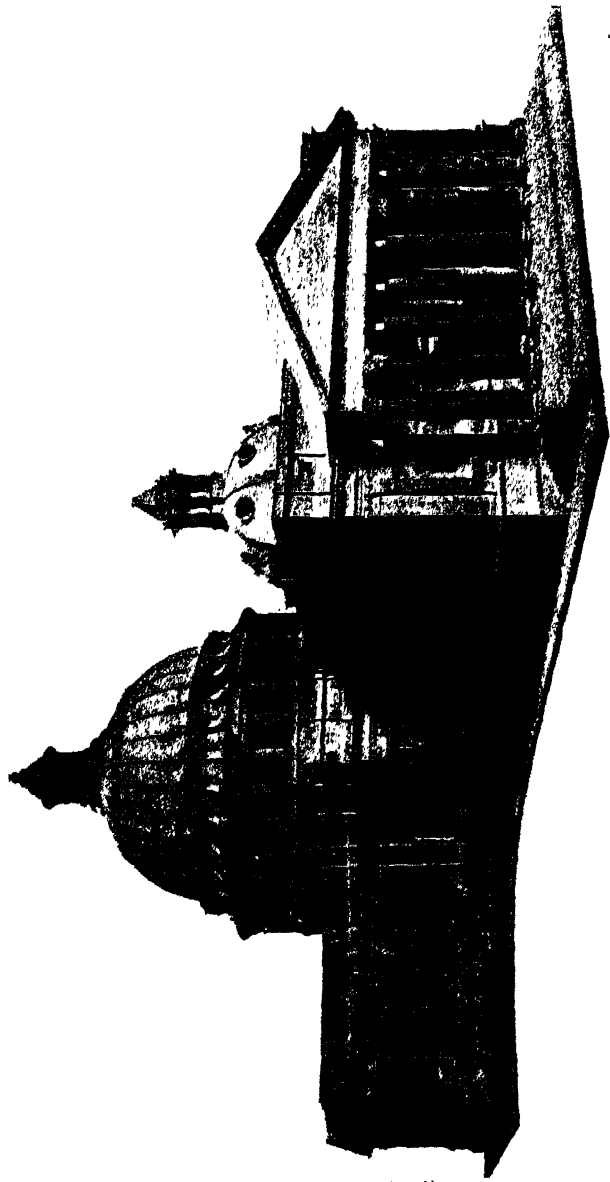
I do not suggest that he spoke thus bluntly, but that was his main point. So that the dome, as such, passed all scrutiny and was accepted as being reasonable. Thus Wren made his first point and was probably quite satisfied.

Where he came to grief was that, in his anxiety to make sure of his dome, he probably laid too much stress on the importance of the sermons. The Bishops opposed him here—Dean Sancroft also, for all I know to the contrary. An imposing nave and suitable aisles were voted for; Dr. Wren must remember that the Sacraments of the Church were the first consideration, and that there must be a magnificent High Altar, a Bishop's Throne, stalls for the rendition of daily services within the choir, in the fashion of other cathedrals.

At the conclusion of the next chapter, devoted to the consideration of St. Paul's as Wren eventually built it, I have given a description of life in an English cathedral, drawn from the experience of five years when I lived that sort of life; the picture, as I have tried to draw it, is just as true of cathedral life in Wren's day as in mine.

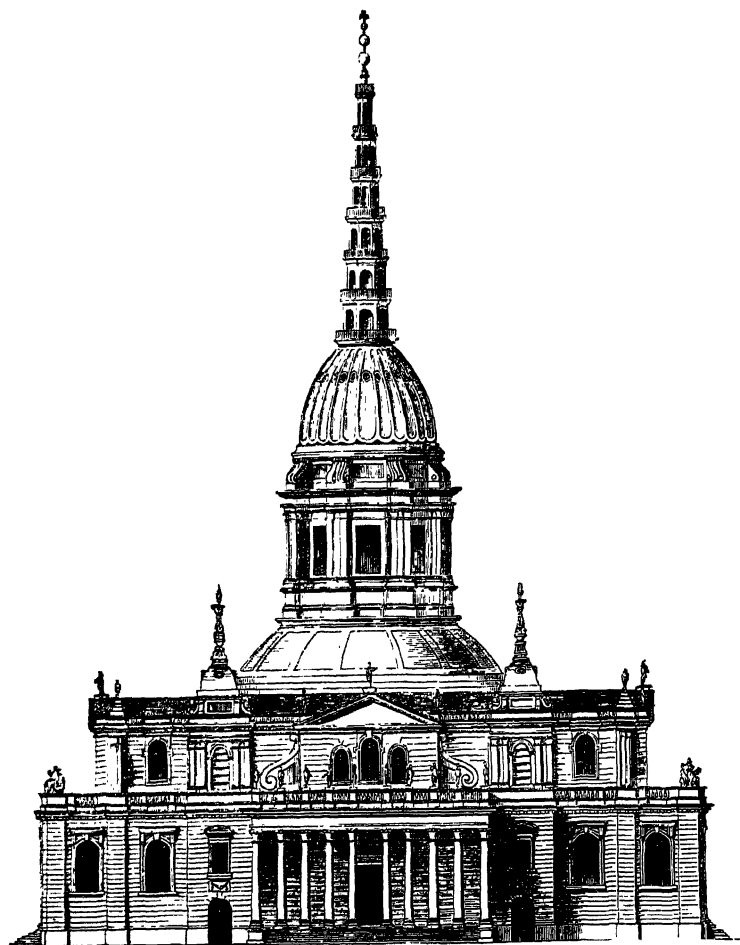
So that I am afraid it must be admitted that the worthy Bishops rather caught Wren out, so to speak, on strictly ecclesiastical lines. He was no doubt heartened at finding the Commissioners were prepared to entertain something really magnificent in conception, and he naturally accepted the point about sacramental suitability of building being the first consideration, but he grumbled a great deal at having to provide for processions. 'They are impertinent,' said he, 'our Religion not using Processions.'

It is a little difficult to follow him here, for the tendency was to have processions in services after the Restoration. In any event, he lost the day, and set about further drawings. The cry of the clergy was for a Latin Cross, pure and simple, which would mean considerable lengthening both east and west of the dome. Wren therefore altered his drawing and added on to the west end, designed another and smaller dome, *and built a model in wood.*



THE CATHEDRAL OF HIS DREAMS

Wren's own model, beautifully executed in wood, is still preserved in St. Paul's
It is said that he wept over the rejection of this, his favourite design
(1668)



Charles R.
*To Our Commissioners for
 Rebuilding the Cathedral Church
 of St. Paul London* By his Maj^{ties} Command
Henry Lovelock

THE ACCEPTED OR WARRANT DESIGN

Note that there is a spire as well as a dome ; also that Wren repeats Inigo Jones's single-order portico. A comparison with the illustration facing p. 152 will show how Wren eventually altered this, the design accepted by King Charles on May 14, 1675

Even so the design was rejected. It is said that he wept in bitter disappointment over the failure of the Greek Cross. As I stood inside Wren's model, which has recently been restored most exquisitely, and is preserved in the cathedral, I wondered whether I ought to add my own tears to his, for it is very beautiful. I was bidden to stand central, under the gorgeous dome, with its wonderful coffering, and to look down the long vistas before me. I examined the capitals of the piers, so finely wrought in model that I could hardly insert my finger-nails between the ridges in the 'sculpture,' and I marvelled at the mind of a man who had perspective under such perfect control as I was made to realize that each detail would appear as I now saw it, had the model suddenly grown to the dimensions of the cathedral it represented.

The model is electrically lit, and to stand in it is to be sorely tempted to make rash statements about Deans and Chapters and Bishops and Kings who interfere with genius. My companion stood 'fifty feet' further down the nave—actually I could touch him—and as we left the model I felt that it was indeed fortunate that I could go to see, in the present cathedral, what the interference (I had a moment ago so bitterly resented) ultimately brought about.

The whole history of the building of St. Paul's seemed to flash before me as I stood in that model; I imagined—and still imagine—that I understood exactly what occurred. Wren was, after much tribulation, asked to build a new cathedral. Even *he* was not asked to do that *every* day, and if he let his genius flare up in all its intensity, if he brought all his classic learning to bear on what he must have known was to be the great work of his life, who shall blame him now for his seeming unmindfulness of ecclesiastical tradition in England? No wonder he wept!

Now let us return to a few hard facts. The authorities were right, undoubtedly. The vistas right and left must have impressed them, but it may have been the good Dean Sancroft who asked that the High Altar should be easily visible to the whole congregation instead of only to a part

of it. I think this may have been so because Wren was devoted to the Dean, and the fact that the Altar is so eminently visible in the present St. Paul's may have been Wren's courteous acquiescence to what would assuredly have been a very courteously-expressed desire.

Unfortunately for Wren's peace of mind, every suggestion he put forward was criticized. Moreover, he was now greatly distressed at the death of his first wife. Nevertheless, he made further designs 'merely for Discourse sake.' The 'Discourse' became a prolonged haggle, judging by the evidence available, and Wren's temper at last gave way. He refused to make any more models or to execute any further drawings as he found, by bitter experience, that they 'did but lose Time and subjected his Business many Times to incompetent Judges.'

It is even said that he went back to Oxford and that he had to be recalled; it is quite likely, for Wren, though patient to the last degree, entertained a hearty contempt for ignorant opinion and certainly was no respecter of persons who irritated him. He must have listened to so much 'Discourse' that he resolved to give the Authorities a mixture of everything they asked for. At least, the next design (now called the Warrant Design) was rather startling.

It possessed a dome *and* a spire, presumably to satisfy everybody who wanted either one or the other; it had a portico not unlike the one Inigo Jones built for old St. Paul's, and which no one seemed to be able to forget; it had other features that may or may not have come out of various people's conversation. It gives me the idea that he said to himself: '*That* ought to suit them; it contains most features they ought not to want but evidently *do*.'

I have often wondered whether he even hoped it would be considered. 'They will be certain to grumble at it,' must have been his thought. Nothing of the kind occurred, however. *It was accepted.*

Trying to read between the lines of all the documentary evidence available, I am not at all certain that Wren did not discuss the plan with Evelyn (incidentally, what did *he*

really think of the Warrant Design ?) and prevail upon him to see the King ; perhaps Wren himself had an audience of his Majesty in order to obtain permission to alter such features as he felt necessary when the time came for construction. My reason for thinking this is based upon the wording of the Warrant.

'Whereas amongst divers Designes which have been represented to Vs, wee have particularly pitched upon one, as well because we found it very artificiall and useful,' says his Majesty. The word 'artificiall' is used in its original sense ; had it not been so, one might be forgiven for thinking it to be used somewhat satirically. Then comes the saving clause—the kind of provision we read in leases with regard to sub-letting in which the landlord's consent may not be 'unreasonably withheld' ; the King, in leaving the building entirely to Wren's personal management, allowed him to modify and alter anything that could be deemed 'rather ornamental than essential,' as the building progressed.

One supposes that Wren, being an artist to his fingertips, regarded everything as being 'ornamental' ; at all events, he altered most of the features.

I like to think of him and Evelyn poring over the drawings, and of Wren saying : 'That steeple is coming off ; I will give it to one of the churches later.' He certainly gave St. Bride's, Fleet Street, something very similar in character.

It is almost amusing to study the various designs he subsequently made, all of which point to the fact that, now that he had obtained the King's permission to make such alterations as he felt were necessary, he intended to set the very broadest construction upon that permission.

The last of these drawings that have come down to us certainly show that he was changing his mind almost every time he used a pencil. Wren improvised in masonry just as John Sebastian Bach improvised in sound. I regard Bach as having possessed the second greatest artistic intellect the world has ever seen, Virgil's being the first ; I also regard the great organ fugue in G minor (known as the *Great G Minor Fugue*) as being one of his great 'buildings.'

I feel that when he played that work for the pleasure it gave him, the main structure of it would sound the same each time, but I can imagine Bach improvising all sorts of beautiful episodes to take the place of those he actually wrote down. So it was with Wren. The subject of his fugue in stone was settled and written down, but his episodes were likely to contain new melodies each time he 'played' them.

For all we know he may never have executed any other design after the last one which has come down to us ; it may be quite true that he prepared working drawings for the use of his craftsmen from it, finally settling the various details when it became urgent.

This, to me, is true improvisation. It has been said that improvisation in music is instantaneous creation and performance. That definition is so much rubbish. The creation in the brain of the *improvisateur* takes place *before*—and well before—the actual playing of the notes. Ideas rush through the brain at an amazing speed ; the fingers follow on.

There is a freshness about real improvisation in music that has its direct counterpart in improvisation in architecture. Neither is it the result of a restless mind that must express itself *somehow*—at least, when in the hands of an artist ; true improvisation is the result of genius backed by scholarship.

That, I feel, is Wren exactly. His brain was so fertile, his imagination so pure, and his technique so perfect, that he had but to concentrate for a few moments in order to see his western towers altering their shape to something that he thought would really be worthy of what he had planned for the rest of the elevation ; or his eye would rove round the area under the dome, and he would plan the colonnade afresh, more effectively than it appeared the last time he looked at the design.

If I may be allowed to persist in this theme of improvisation (which I am convinced was the power in Wren's genius) and to change my metaphor at the same time, it would be to urge that Wren eventually spun St. Paul's like

a web, varying a strand, here and there, almost as he went along. Nearly all works of genius have been (so to speak) *spun*, for genius is that spark of divinity God occasionally gives to man which never leaves him alone for a moment of time. It seems to me that the Almighty makes excellent spiders of those to whom He gives exceptional intellect.

We can now imagine Wren standing on his special platform, which he caused to be raised on scaffolding, in order to plan out his new cathedral. The fact that masses of fallen stone lay about everywhere did not upset his calculations in the least ; he seemed to possess a faculty for seeing through stone at any time.

All the same, he must have regarded the enormous fragments of the central tower as a problem that needed his immediate attention ; there they stood, at least two hundred feet high and, what is more, they had a disturbing solidity about their appearance. Wren had already decided to try blowing them up with gunpowder, and made this one of his first tasks.

He began by the side of the great north-west pier which stood at the angle of the nave and transept, and had been one of the main supports of the old tower and spire. A hole about four feet square was dug, at his orders, close to the pier itself, another being bored into the masonry to a distance of about seven feet. In this cavity Wren placed a canister of gunpowder weighing about eighteen pounds. He then set a fuse, fired it, and waited.

The result was as interesting as sudden ; the whole pier lifted bodily and fell, bringing part of the ruined nave with it. The shock was felt for some distance ; contemporary accounts state that it was like an earthquake. At all events, it did what Wren required.

Having occasion to leave town to execute a commission for the King, the Surveyor gave directions for a complete demolition by the same means. The subordinate who undertook the work either used too much powder or misjudged the setting of the fuse ; there was very nearly a serious accident. The pier lifted according to plan, but a fragment of considerable dimensions flew off sideways and

crashed through a window, landing in a room where some women were at work.

Apart from the fact that it was not exactly pleasant to have pieces of the cathedral flying about in this fashion, the whole of London's nerves were still on edge as a result of the Fire. Consequently, there was an outcry that eventually resolved itself into a sort of petition to the King in order that the Surveyor-General might be restrained from employing such forceful, if spectacular, methods of razing the ruins.

What Wren said to the engineer has never transpired ; all we know is that, as usual, his inventive mind solved the difficulty. He had not forgotten the days at Westminster School when he had read his Livy and had thrilled at the results of the use of a battering-ram. He may have read Josephus on the matter, and have modelled his ram on those used at the siege of Jerusalem. At all events, he determined to construct and utilize 'that ancient Engine in War' for his present purpose.

The whole of one day was devoted to the work ; thirty men, divided into two teams, worked the ropes, but the piers withstood their efforts. The men would have given up, but Wren bade them continue, saying that no wall in existence could remain standing for long against such a weapon. They therefore drew back the ram and let it go again time after time ; late in the afternoon of the second day the pier fell with a deafening crash, and cheers rent the air. It must have been an inspiring sight. In due course the 'whole cathedral, once the pride of all England, lay a shapeless mass of stone.

Then began the task of clearing away the debris, some of which was taken over by the authorities for the purposes of street paving—not before there was need for it, one might add. Other, and finer fragments were kept for the churches. Thus London walked on its old cathedral for long enough ; some of the stone still does duty, not only in the churches but in the cathedral itself. The dust and dirt must have been appalling as the vast quantities of rubble were broken up.

The fund from the tax on coal was steadily mounting up, and it may have occurred to Londoners that, as fire destroyed its cathedral, it was a little ironical that a charge on fuel should help to rebuild it. It was truly a case of dust to dust and ashes to ashes, but it was in sure and certain hope that a new church would arise (that should have everlasting life) that they watched its demolition.

CHAPTER XII

WREN BUILDS HIS CATHEDRAL

IN dealing with Wren's work as an architect I am faced with a minor problem. This book, as has already been explained, is in no way intended to be a technical discussion on Renaissance architecture, there being nothing that I could say that would be of the least value. It has all been said; there are many works extant, written by practising architects in some instances, which have completely and adequately discussed St. Paul's Cathedral from its foundations to the cross above the dome.

In reading these excellent works I have been somewhat disturbed at the diversity of opinion on far too many points; I have read critical matter that can only be described as a prolonged sneer; I have read adulatory accounts so extravagant in their expression as to leave me as cold as the top stone of the lantern.

Whichever way the various writers have expressed themselves, one matter remains common to them all—namely, their use of architectural terms. It is quite natural, of course; we all talk shop at times. We have only to find ourselves for a short while in company with a number of practising musicians to hear enough technical terms to fill a glossary. Probably it is the same with architects.

If I may take music as an illustration for a point I wish definitely and conclusively to make at this juncture, it would be to suggest that any one who listens intelligently to symphony concerts or chamber music by means of wireless can read, with enjoyment and profit, books and articles designed to further appreciation of good music, *so long as* their authors refrain from writing about 'the

chord of the dominant ninth,' or from discussions on 'contrapuntal development,' 'canonic imitation,' or 'inversions in double counterpoint at the twelfth.'

As soon as a writer explodes in that fashion his public immediately becomes a limited one; he may appeal to students at an academy, but he causes his wider public to skip a few passages, or even to cease reading altogether.

On the other hand, technical terms are sometimes unavoidable inasmuch as it is essential to call things by their right names. While it is not necessary, for the purposes of this book, to give formal definitions of such terms as *nave*, *dome*, *choir*, or *transept* (simply because every one knows what they mean) it may be of use to those who have not acquired technical knowledge of architecture to become familiar with the meaning of such terms as *entablature*, *bastion*, *pilaster*, and the like.

It is with this idea in mind that I here furnish the reader with an informally worded glossary of such technical terms as I shall be forced to employ, believing that those who already know will understand my motive, and that those who do not know will come to understand something that will be the means of affording them æsthetic pleasure the next time, or possibly the first time, they visit London's great cathedral. This little glossary will be found to be illustrated; a study of the drawing will repay any one who is sufficiently interested in architecture to wish to learn something about it.

Pillar (Column) and Pier.—Pillar and Column mean the same thing, namely, a vertical mass of masonry acting as a support to an arch, gallery, or some other such superstructure. The term *pier* means very little else, but in this work it is used for supports that are not round and which are of considerable dimensions.

Pilaster.—A column that is 'engaged,' or connected with a wall from which it slightly projects.

Capital.—The crowning member of a column, generally decorated in sculpture.

Entablature.—A horizontal mass of masonry carried along from column to column. It is in three parts. First

the *architrave*, the supporting member ; second, the frieze, the purely decorative member ; third, the *cornice*, the projecting member. The frieze may be plain ; it often is with Wren, acting as decoration by contrast either with the cornice or the capital of the column, or both.

Bastion.—In fortifications, a bastion is a kind of tower placed in an important position, especially at a projecting angle from which it is possible advantageously to fire upon an enemy. Architecturally, it is a fortification in the strengthening sense only, but it can be entered just as though it were used for military purposes. Bastions are generally fitted with staircases.

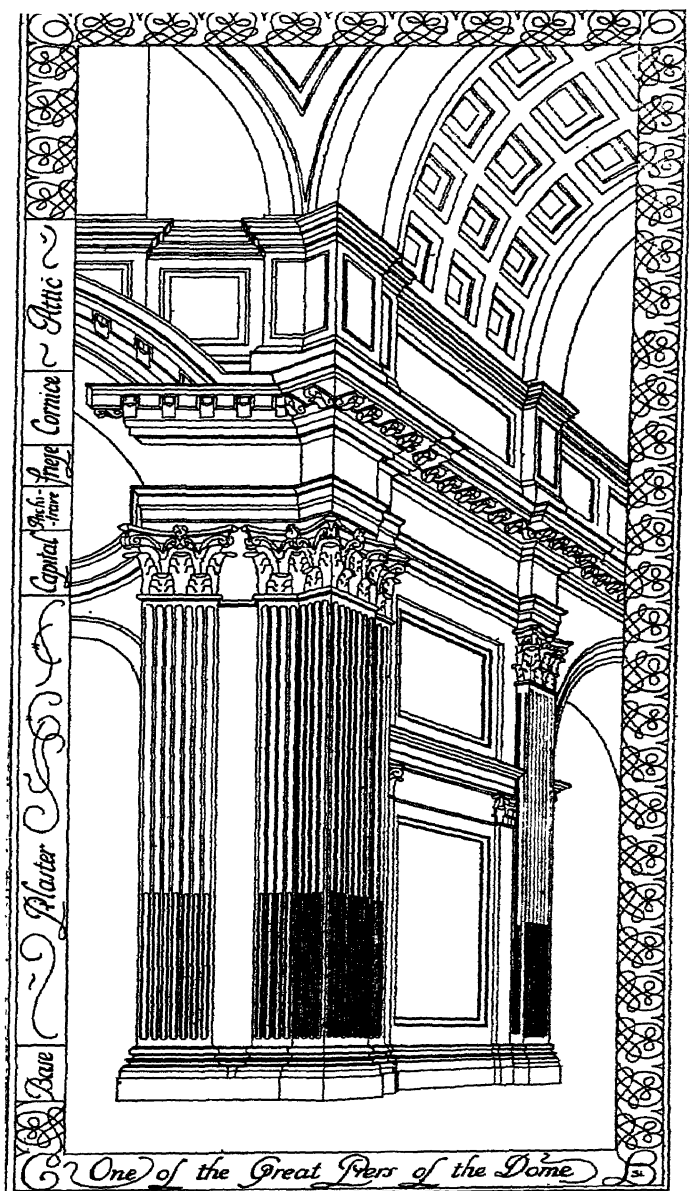
Apse, Ambulatory.—An apse is a semi-circular recess terminating the choir, transept, or aisle of a church, usually having a semidome for its roof. If there is room *behind* a High Altar to admit of processions of clergy and choir, the space so provided is termed an ambulatory.

Vault.—Not necessarily under the ground. Vaulting is a system of bridging over a space with stone or brick *in arched form*. Vaulting exists in many beautiful forms. The fan-vaulting in Henry VII Chapel at Westminster, or in King's, Cambridge ; the Early English vaulting in Winchester Cathedral, or the Lierne vaulting in Salisbury Cathedral (where short ribs cross between the main ribs) are specimens to study. Wren made use of barrel-vaulting, so called from the fact that a roof thus treated has the appearance of the upper half of a barrel lying on its side or—better still—of the tunnelling in the London tubes. Also he was fond of a groined vault ; a *groin* is the angle formed by the intersection of the arches.

Pendentive.—The term given in architecture to the bridging across the angles of a square building in order to obtain a circular base for a dome or cupola. St. Mary Abchurch offers good examples.

Fenestration.—A general term for the arrangement of the windows of a church, more especially when they are an important feature.

Pediment.—In classic architecture, the triangular-shaped portion above the cornice that adorns a portico.



This drawing, by Cecil Brown, illustrates part of the glossary of architectural terms given on the opposite page. The various technical expressions appear on the extreme left of the picture

It corresponds to a gable in Gothic structures. The space enclosed by the lines of the triangle is called the *tympanum*; this is often (as at St. Paul's) decorated by sculpture.

The best way we can visualize the building of St. Paul's is to be orderly in our methods. We have already seen how Wren cleared away the rubbish after the fire was extinguished, and we can now walk with him in our imagination and examine the state of the ground.

Had he been able to trust the foundations of old St. Paul's, the orientation of the present cathedral would not have been quite so northerly. Even the old cathedral did not point dead east, and Wren decided that, even though he was *seven degrees* too northerly, it would be better to have it so and avoid the old foundations altogether.

We can imagine him standing there with Evelyn, deciding this point. 'It is unnecessary,' said Wren, 'too nicely to observe East and West in the position *unless it falls out properly*.' Then we can watch them, as they turned and looked down Ludgate Hill. If I may be allowed to invent a little conversation, I may make one or two points clearer than I should by recounting facts in an historical fashion.

'I wish those buildings in Ludgate had not been started,' (we will suppose Wren to have said).

'It is too late to alter anything,' says Evelyn. 'The humbugs on the commission delayed the arrangements for the cathedral, and those fellows have got the start of us.'

'One thing is perfectly certain,' says Wren. 'I shall never build St. Paul's to face straight down Ludgate now. A pity, but I am not going to alter the position of my cathedral.'

'Look at Fleet Street,' says Evelyn; 'it has a bend in it already.' Then, can we not imagine them turning to each other and saying, 'Oh, *why* did they not listen to us? The view from the front of St. Paul's would have been like a view in ancient Ephesus.'

Busy days followed; Wren began to dig for his foundations. Let us imagine Evelyn paying him a visit at a later date. He finds Wren has had trouble at the north-east corner of the site.

'Some one—the Romans probably—have quarried here,' he remarks. 'There is nothing but sand and gravel. I shall not risk building on such a foundation. It means going a long way down, but it will have to be done.'

Again the weeks fly past, and Wren has dug a hole about eighteen feet square and has shored up its sides with timber. He has gone through the layer of pot-earth, about six feet thick, and has come upon sand 'dry enough to go through the fingers.' Next he has found water and sand, mixed with periwinkle and other forms of shell, and at last has come down on the hard, natural London clay. That is what he has found everywhere, but at this north-east corner he is in trouble over what he considers to be the result of quarrying.

He tells Evelyn how he has found a great quantity of animal bones, as well as some Roman pottery, and we can imagine them discussing the probability of that traditional temple to Diana having been a reality.

The conversation I have suggested as possibly having taken place between Evelyn and Wren is based upon the statements made in *Parentalia*—a work which, as has already been pointed out, is inaccurate in places. The strange thing about this particular account, which concludes by stating that Wren eventually filled the hole at the north-east corner of the building with solid stone up to a point about fifteen feet below the surface, throwing an arch thence to the interrupted foundation, has been questioned in recent years.

Sir Mervyn Macartney, when Surveyor to the Dean and Chapter, sank nine boreholes, six inches in diameter, in the ground at this point. Although these holes were spread over an area both inside and outside the cathedral, the architect did not hit upon any part of Wren's stone foundation. He found debris at the top, then pot-earth, then sand, gravel, a mixture of sand and gravel, and, forty feet down, the London clay. This excavation was undertaken in 1914.

The old cathedral, so Wren discovered, was built with its foundations on the pot-earth; Wren's foundations begin

about four-and-a-half feet below the level of the crypt—in other words, they total about fifteen feet below the ground.

It has been said that Wren began building at the west end, but recent opinion is that he began at the east as, indeed, he was ordered to. At all events, his main walls are in two storeys separated by a splendid cornice. At each corner, between the choir, transepts, and nave, he built four bastions which served as extra buttresses to the dome. Three of them also offered excellent vestry accommodation. Wren finished off his east end with a beautiful apse, now the Jesus Chapel.

The west end (regarded from outside, of course) was probably a little surprising in that it was known that Wren originally intended to build his portico with enormous single columns whose diameter was to be anything up to nine feet.

The difficulty which confronted him, so the story goes, was that the Portland quarries could not produce stone of the required size—in fact, not more than half the size. It may have been that he would not hear of his columns being other than ‘the real thing,’ and, rather than compromise in any way, decided to give up the idea of single columns and erect his portico in two sections, or *orders* (to use the architectural expression).

It was pointed out to me that the question of single stones for the columns need not have signified so greatly (unless Wren had made up his mind to use single stones or nothing), but that there would be a difficulty over the projecting cornice which would have to appear above the columns. I was reminded that huge columns, such as Wren had originally designed, would have to carry a correspondingly great cornice; otherwise he would have fallen into the trap so apparent at St. Peter’s, Rome, where massive columns support a cornice totally incommensurate in size.

Even while writing these words I have again studied the portico of St. Peter’s by means of a magnifying glass focused on an excellent photograph. I am bound

to state I see the point: the cornice at St. Peter's is surprisingly unconvincing.

Yet Wren's portico is quite wrong, according to the accepted rules of classical architecture. He knew it, of course; one could hardly suggest otherwise. It is impossible not to admire his coolness in erecting a portico of two orders, especially as it must be remembered that Inigo Jones's single-order portico had been greatly admired. That he let himself in for hot criticism there can be no doubt.

In face of it all, the portico was built in two sections. Not only so, but the columns were coupled together—another chance for the purists, who would be sure to say that this, also, was a departure from accepted forms. And yet, when one looks at the west front of St. Paul's, it is in total admiration of that very matter; the utter grace of coupled pillars in two delicate orders, instead of one, is a stroke of the purest artistry.

This criticism on the grounds that a departure has been made from accepted rule leads nowhere. John Sebastian Bach broke many rules of the art of fugal writing—but *who wrote fugues as he wrote them?* Accepted rules in fugue are as rigid as those in architecture; it is the genius who, learning first to be strict, can ultimately express himself with complete freedom.

The western towers, from the visitor's point of view, are best studied from the top of Ludgate Hill inasmuch as they should be regarded as part of the western elevation. The best place to study their undoubted beauty, however, is from the peristyle, or colonnade, below the dome. The public is not admitted to the colonnade, which is perhaps as well, as there is none too much room at the base of the huge columns to pass on the outside edge, from which a splendid view of the towers is obtainable.

The view of Wren's churches from the eastern side of the colonnade cannot be equalled. More or less the same view can be seen from either of the galleries above, but the angle is so much steeper; also the balustrades interrupt one's vision.

The noble tower of St. Dunstan's and that of St. Michael's, Cornhill, make interesting comparison, while the grace of the steeple of Bow Church attracts the eye immediately; it is only when one walks round to the north side of the colonnade and looks from the exquisite stone steeple of St. Vedast's, Foster Lane, to that of Christ Church, Newgate Street, which is a little further away, that one realizes how ingenious Wren was with his church towers.

The next time I ask to be allowed to go out on to the peristyle of St. Paul's, it will be when I am armed with a powerful pair of binoculars. It is a sight not to miss. The thought occurs to me at this moment to suggest to my readers that the use of a good magnifying glass for the illustrations of this book is extremely satisfactory; the architectural detail will be found to stand out in clear relief.

To return to the western elevation. It was just the genius of Wren to erect those towers on either side of the portico, thus giving an imposing width to the whole elevation. They grow very gracefully, their side-lines starting from the ground in a fashion so typical of Wren. It seems strange that no one has yet discovered what ought to go into the circular hole in the north-west tower to correspond with the clock on the other side. As Wren was fond of inventing 'weather-clocks,' a reliable barometer would not seem amiss! As a point of fact, it must remain as it is for the sake of the bells, whose pealing would otherwise be ineffective; sight is thus sacrificed for sound.

The real beauty of the western towers begins just above the level of the clock and its corresponding 'hole.' If the reader will use his glass on the picture given here, and allow his eye to travel slowly upwards, lingering on the beautiful cornice above the exquisitely delicate order of columns, then slowly up to the healthy-looking golden pine-apples on the top, he will realize my point about the freshness of improvisation in architecture. I believe in my own mind that Wren thought of that design at the very last moment.

Before leaving the western front to take a look at the north and south porticos, it will repay the visitor to spend a few moments in contemplation of the triangular piece, called the pediment, over the cornice. It represents the scene of the Conversion of St. Paul, and was executed by Francis Bird in 1706. For this he was paid £650. He was also responsible for the fine figure of St. Paul (central), of St. Peter and St. James on either side, and for the four Evangelists on the towers.

A further point of interest is Dean's Door, situated on the southern side of the clock-tower: it is an imposing entrance. The clock-tower, by the way, contains the huge bell known as Great Paul—by some as Big Paul—cast in 1881 by Taylor's, of Loughborough. Great Paul is rung daily at one o'clock for five minutes, four men being employed for the purpose.

It is a somewhat thrilling experience to stand on the top step of the iron staircase leading to where Great Paul hangs. His height is 8 feet 8 inches; his diameter is 9 feet 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches; his thickness at the bow is 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches; and he weighs 16 tons 14 cwt. 2 qrs. 19 lb., to be exact.

At one o'clock one's sense is almost negated by the noise of the clock chiming and striking the hour. By this time Great Paul is well 'on the swing,' and one waits with a distinctly unpleasant feeling of awe until he first speaks. His voice is not so terrible in his first words but, as the tolling proceeds, overtones and harmonics seem to fly off him in all directions, the keynote being almost lost. The foundation-note, E flat, however, is more distinct as one descends the staircase. One has had to lean well back in order to let Paul swing; the position on the top step only separates one's body from his by a distance measured in inches. Half-way down the staircase the clapper is visible; it has made an ugly bruise on both sides of the bell. As I left the home of Great Paul he was swinging merrily on his own, but still roaring to the full of his majestic voice. It is a privilege to have visited him, but it is one that is not, of course, accorded to the public.

Great Paul cost £4000. As a point of fact, he was intended for the other tower, but the expense of finding room for him caused the authorities to have him hung in the clock-tower. His ascent thereto—he was hauled through the opening in the domed ceiling above the Geometrical Staircase—must have been worth seeing.

Great Paul's predecessors are interesting. In 1698 Great Tom, the great Westminster bell, was sold to St. Paul's Commissioners. This bell weighed 84 cwt. It was recast by Wightman, but it was said that the work was imperfectly executed. Wren, who was having a bad time with the Commissioners just then (of which more will be said later), declared that Great Tom had been damaged 'by their exposing it to be made a show of and to be struck upon by those who gave money for seeing it.'

In 1709 Richard Phelps cast 'a large new Bell for the great clock to strike ye hours upon' which was to weigh about five tons. This was, judging from contemporary accounts, no better than Wightman's bell. There seems, however, to have been some confidence in Phelps, because he was paid £64 for casting another bell, using some of the old material; it weighed a little over 92 cwt. This bell still hangs in the south-west tower. None of the S.W. bells are 'rung' (except Great Paul); it is only possible to strike them with hammers. The other tower contains the splendid peal of twelve bells.

The present clock, designed by Lord Grimthorpe, was installed in 1893. Its faces point east and west. Wren had a clock made by a man named Langley Bradley. This clock gave considerable trouble but, as the good Bradley explained, what did the authorities expect if the public was allowed to inspect it? This was in reply to an accusation to the effect that he had supplied a defective timepiece. In 1719 another clock was built by Richard Street and William Knight. This seems to have been satisfactory for it remained there for over one hundred and seventy years.

The north and south porticos are worth studying, if only to admire the Gibbons pediment over the former

(with the royal arms) and, more still perhaps, Cibber's pediment over the latter, where a Phoenix rises from flames, with the motto *Resurgam*.

There is a pretty story, quite true, told concerning this word. Wren, when deciding the position for his dome, called to one of the workmen, asking him to bring a piece of stone so that the centre spot might be marked. The man picked up the nearest piece and brought it to Wren, who was quick to notice that it was a fragment of old tombstone and that a word was engraved on it. The word was *Resurgam*—'I shall rise again.' A simple incident, but one that was not lost upon Wren.

In order to support the great dome with which he intended to crown his cathedral and, at the same time, compensate London for the loss of the great spire of old St. Paul's, Wren built eight piers, of extraordinary slenderness considering the responsibility they have to take, as well as four bastions.

The bastions form a great square; the piers, on the other hand, form an octagon, two being at the entrance of the choir, two at the entrance of the nave, the other four being divided between the north and south transepts. Wren, however, gave the effect of a circle, by means of what are called pendentives, and as one stands directly under the dome and deliberately studies the bases of the eight piers, it is possible to recognize the octagon; as soon as the eyes are raised to the magnificent arches, the effect is circular, the two effects blending so perfectly as to be quite mystifying.

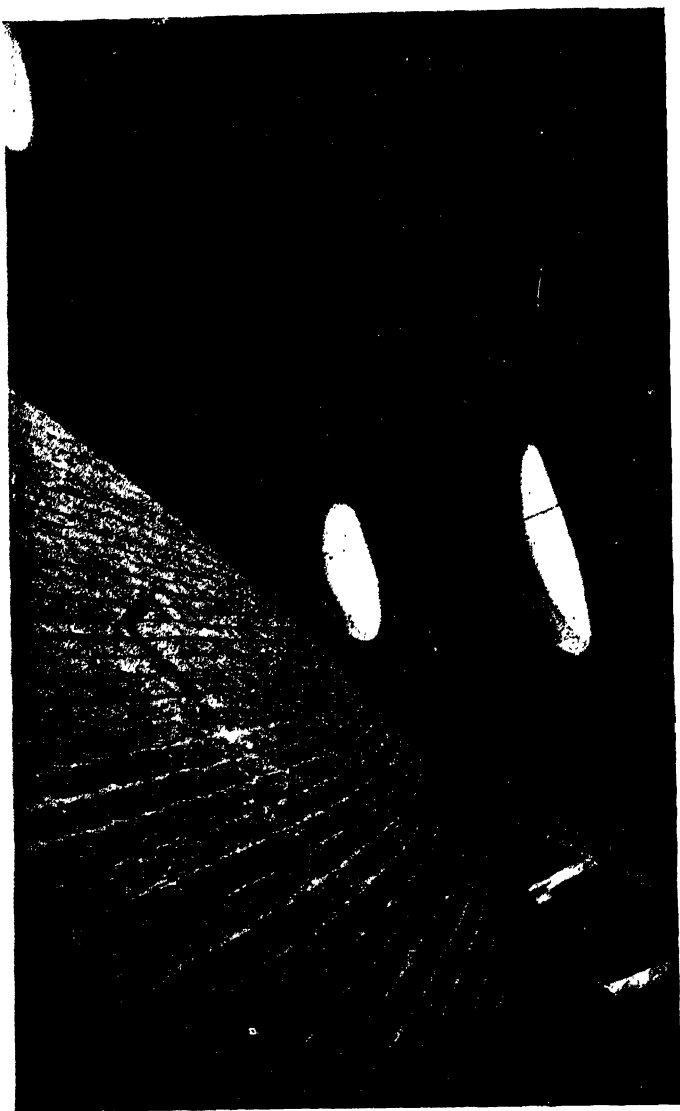
Above the eight arches comes the famous Whispering Gallery where the walls begin to lean in slightly, and as the eye is raised aloft to the ceiling of the dome everything seems curved. The ceiling of the dome, painted by Sir James Thornhill (as seen from the floor) is by no means identical with the curve of the dome as seen from outside; what one sees from the floor is the inner dome, which is a shell eighteen inches thick, bound round by a huge chain of iron embedded in a band of Portland stone at a point which can be identified from the street as the Stone Gallery.



THE WESTERN ELEVATION OF ST. PAUL'S

A comparison with the Warrant Design (facing p. 135) will show how Wren discarded the steeple, designed two noble towers, and built a double-order portico instead of carrying out his predecessor's ideas

(1685-1710)



BETWEEN THE INNER DOME AND THE CONE

On the left is seen the upper side of the Inner Dome, the lower side of which is visible from the church floor. The brick cone, on the right, is not visible either from inside or outside ; its office is to support the Stone Lantern, Ball and Cross

The chain is necessary at this point because a brick cone (also eighteen inches thick) springs upwards. This cone, of course, is not visible either from inside or outside ; it is part of the ' works.' This will be readily understood when it is explained that the stone lantern weighs about seven hundred tons, and that what is seen of the dome from the street is merely wood covered with lead. It does not strain the imagination to realize that such a shell could not be expected to carry such a burden. *It is the cone that takes the weight of the stone lantern.* Its own tip is of Portland stone, and it is banded in six places by iron chains embedded in masonry.

Despite all this precaution, the dome is never still for a second ; it exerts what is technically known as a *thrust*—a pressure, in other words. Wherever that thrust is exerted Wren has taken care that it shall be resisted ; thus the dome of St. Paul's has stood the test of time.

Viewed externally, the dome presents a charming picture. The colonnade, with its noble order of columns, makes a wonderful beginning to it, and the handsome stone lantern a still more wonderful finish.

The lantern is one of Wren's strokes of genius ; it is the logical outcome of the design of the towers and is constructed in four stages. The lowest of these, behind the Golden Gallery, is not particularly ornamental ; Wren never wasted money in decorating anything that would not be seen. In this case the balustrade of the gallery hides it when viewed from the street. The second stage is a specimen of perfect artistry ; it has sixteen coupled columns which, at so great a distance, give the impression that they are almost the same as those on the towers. Wren took into account that perspective would lessen the necessity for many columns which, had he built them, would have blurred the effect. The ornaments on the third stage are flaming urns of stone, by which Wren is thought to have symbolized the Fire. Lastly, an octagonal leaden lantern curves sharply until it forms a support for the ball from which the cross rises immediately.

Nothing has thus far been said about the roof of the

cathedral; nothing need be said about it, because it is invisible from the street. That was Wren's way. He held very strong views on the matter. While he agreed that a flying buttress in Gothic architecture can be, and often is, a slightly device, he would not allow one to be seen in a Renaissance structure. It was the same with a roof. Something like six hundred feet of roof on old St. Paul's was once seen for miles round; the old tower possessed some very healthy-looking flying buttresses, equally obvious to the most casual observer.

Wren's cathedral has flying buttresses, but they are not visible, and are protected from the worst of the weather; neither is the roof seen, except from some point like the peristyle or one of the upper galleries. The north and south walls are built in two storeys, the upper ones acting as a screen both to the roof and the buttresses.

This has been the subject of much adverse criticism. Pugin, the Victorian English architect who was devoted to Gothic methods and could not tolerate any other, sneered at Wren, saying that one-half of St. Paul's was built to hide the other half. Such criticism is not worth listening to. Wren's opinion that no roof was worthy to appear, 'save the Spherick,' was the opinion of one devoted to classical structures, and such an opinion naturally clashes with Gothic opinion. A painter of pictures devoted to water-colours cannot be expected to use the same methods of treatment of his subjects as one who works in oils.

As to the walls themselves, while it may be difficult to *prove* them to be doing work for the dome, one imagines that it would be a risky proceeding to pull them down to the level of the lower storey. A dome such as that on St. Paul's is an architectural nuisance, in a sense, merely because the thrust from it is so powerful.

Wren built thirty-two columns in his colonnade, so placed as to form part of a system of buttresses extending from a point immediately above the main arches to another point approximately twenty-five feet above the Stone Gallery.

This will give some idea of what an architect has to contend with when he erects a dome of that size and weight.



ST. PAUL'S, LOOKING EAST

This photograph was taken on Midsummer Day, 1930, the eve of the re-opening of the cathedral after the restorations

(1675-1710)



A BROKEN TIE

Iron ties were inserted by Wren in St. Paul's piers for strengthening purposes. This one, which bound a pier to a neighbouring bastion, eventually broke under the strain exerted by pressure from the Dome. Another tie has been inserted

Realizing that there would be a likelihood of his piers bending inwards under the weight of the lantern and the two domes, Wren strapped them back to the bastions. His fears were not unfounded; it was recently discovered that nearly all these ties, which were of wrought-iron, have broken. 'An arch never sleeps,' says a well-known Arab proverb; it would seem that the dome of St. Paul's has been very much awake these two hundred years. It was said, some years ago, that St. Paul's Cathedral was slowly moving down Ludgate Hill; a cynic might be forgiven for suggesting that the matter was of no importance inasmuch as the police would be sure to hold it up when it arrived at the Circus, as they seem to hold up everything else at that point.

I have tried to give some sort of description of the 'activities' of so mighty a structure because I feel that visitors—Londoners, too—glance up at the dome of St. Paul's without the least idea of the story of how it came to be built, or of what responsibility it throws on to other members of the building.

The dome is heavy enough as it is; had Wren constructed the outer shell of it in *stone* he might have lived to see the best part of it down in the nave. He was wise enough to build, where he was able, in wood. In any event, such a colossal structure, ever restless, ever exerting pressure, needs some handling; it was Wren's great intellect that devised what was essential to stand up against the eternal thrust.

It was said that he hated putting a chain round it, and that he did so only under pressure from the King's commission; there is a story—a fable most likely—that he had it cut secretly after it was placed in position. There are generally stories of that kind about famous buildings, but this is one that we can afford to disregard.

Entering by the west doors, it is as well to stand fairly central for some minutes in order to take in as much as possible of the long vista to the east end. It can all be examined, bit by bit, as one proceeds, but the immediate impressions are so startling, owing to the vastness of the

place, that it is as well to accustom the eye to a general impression first of all.

The saucer-domes in the ceiling play tricks with the imagination immediately. The one at the extreme west is larger than the other three, but as one looks eastward each begins to cut into its neighbour, and it is difficult to believe they are circles at all until one proves it by standing under them, each in turn.

Perspective is a pleasant illusion. We look at the size of the black square on which we are standing, and then at the white one on which somebody else is standing, and marvel that they all seem to become small enough to play chess on in the distance. The piers of the nave, so expansive that we crane our necks to scan the nearest of them, become quite manageable in two glances at the far end; it is not a matter of difficulty to admire the grace of the great arch over the entrance to the choir and to take in the visible section of the wall of the Whispering Gallery at the same time.

Such is Perspective, part of the Mind of God, given to mankind for his pleasure. How strange it is that the ancient sculptors, and artists generally, could never show the effects of it in their work!

I have never inclined towards atheism, but if I had, two sets of laws would have saved me from it—those of Perspective and those of Sound. I have stood by the west door of St. Paul's and enjoyed being made to believe that the lines of the cornice above the arches really *do* fall, though I know all the time that they are perfectly horizontal, just as I have enjoyed the process of sorting out one chord of an *amen* from the other, after the dome has finished with both and what is left has floated my way.

The two chapels are worth visiting: that in the north nave aisle being St. Dunstan's, used for daily services and private purposes; the one opposite, in the south nave aisle, being the chapel of St. Michael and St. George. In the former are the first mosaics executed by Richmond, and one (at the west end) by Salviati, the subject being the 'Holy Women at the Sepulchre.' The chandelier was once

in St. Mildred's Poultry, built by Wren in 1676, but destroyed in 1872. The Kitchener Memorial Chapel (1925) is on the ground floor of the north-west tower.

The chapel of St. Michael and St. George was once the Consistory Court. It is much the same in design as the other, the carved screens of both being by Maine and the railings by Robinson. The coffering in the ceiling of the apse in both chapels is singularly impressive. In the south aisle is the well-known picture by Holman Hunt, 'The Light of the World.' This is Hunt's own replica; the original is in Keble College, Oxford.

The south-west bastion is the only one of the four not used as a vestry on the ground floor. The north-west bastion harbours the Lord Mayor's vestry, the north-east is placed at the disposal of the Minor Canons, while that on the south-east side of the cathedral belongs to the Dean. The south-west bastion contains the staircase leading to the Library and the galleries round the dome. It is possible to proceed as far as the ball below the cross, but not to enter it; it has been wired off. The height of the ball and cross combined is twenty-three feet, the weight about seven tons.

It is also possible to look down through a small aperture in the floor of the lantern at the floor of the cathedral. I mention this because one then really gets some idea of the beauty of the design of Wren's paving; as for the rest, to regard the tiny specks which look like insects crawling about is but to reflect on the insignificance of man.

The choir of St. Paul's needs prolonged study if one is to absorb its beauties; the Gibbons carving is too majestic to appreciate at first sight. Neither is it often a case of love at first sight; the love for his work grows apace, but only after one has been with it for some time.

The mosaics, by Richmond, in the vaulting and saucer-domes are very fine of their kind; whether Wren would have approved of them is another matter. It is all very sumptuous, of course; when one has said that, one has said most of what need be said.

The reredos dates from 1888. Wren finished off the east end with a suitable apse which was intended 'only to

serve till such Time and Materials could have been procured for a magnificent Design of an Altar consisting of four pillars wreathed, of the richest Greek marbles supporting a Canopy hemispherical, with proper decorations of Architecture and Sculpture for which the respective Drawings and a Model were prepared.'

His ideas were carried out in part only. Where is the 'Canopy hemispherical'? The reredos is dignified and not unecclesiastical, but its position might well be questioned, the more so when it is remembered that Wren designed the apse *to be seen*. The *Jesus Chapel* is the name given to the apsidal space behind the High Altar, but the whole conception is unworthy its surroundings. To walk behind the Altar to look at it is to be somewhat shocked at what seems merely a passage.

On the whole, though sumptuous in the extreme, the east end of St. Paul's is now a little disappointing from the decorative point of view. Tijou's ironwork is so perfectly beautiful that it demands everything to be in keeping with it; there is a lack of conformity to the spirit of the Renaissance period that might have been avoided.

St. Faith's Chapel, in the crypt, is worth visiting as, indeed, is the crypt itself. Wren and his daughter are buried there. Before leaving the cathedral it is advisable to study the decorations in each of the four quarter-domes, even though it may be concluded, as with those in the vaulting of the choir, that they are hardly in the best taste in a Renaissance cathedral.

The paintings by Thornhill in the dome are now so faded as to be indistinguishable except from the Whispering Gallery.

Sir James Thornhill very nearly lost his life while engaged in painting these eight scenes from the life of St. Paul. Completely lost in concentration upon his work, he suddenly stepped back on the scaffold to get a better view of the effect he was producing. His assistant chanced to look up and saw, to his horror, that Thornhill was about to fall. Instead of attracting his attention by calling to him—which would probably have had fatal

results—he quickly took a brush and daubed the work. Thornhill rushed forward angrily, thinking his assistant had suddenly gone mad ; the action saved his life.

Last, but certainly not least, before leaving the great work of Christopher Wren's life, the visitor should ask permission to look at the famous Geometrical Staircase, situated at the extreme south-west of the cathedral. The iron-work, combined with the carved stone, is quite one of the best things to see in St. Paul's.

A word about the organ might not be out of place at this juncture. Wren originally wished it to be placed on one side of the choir, but the Dean and Chapter opposed him and demanded that it should be put on the choir-screen. Bernard Smith, the builder, asked Wren for more room in order to extend the range of the notes down to the low C. As the necessary pipes were bound to be larger than those already in, Wren refused, saying that he could not allow Smith any further space. Smith thereupon said he would omit some other stops and avoid the difficulty that way. He could not, however, do anything about the *length* of the pipes, and Wren, ever obliging, agreed to construct the case to take them. Gibbons carved the case.

The addition, in 1720, of a pedal board attracted the attention of the great Handel, who often came to play on the organ in St. Paul's. Whether Wren, at that time eighty-eight, ever came to listen to him, is not on record, but it is scarcely conceivable that he had not met Handel, who had been the rage of London ever since 1710.

The organ was taken down and rebuilt in the second bay on the north side of the choir in 1859 ; in 1871 Willis altered it, this time dividing and placing it at the west end of the choir, where it still remains. It has been recently altered again and is now one of the finest instruments in the world.

A few measurements may be of interest. The extreme length of the cathedral is 520 feet 6 inches ; the total height, from the crypt floor at Nelson's tomb to the top of the cross, is 374 feet 9 inches. The extreme breadth,

including the north and south porticos, is 290 feet ; the breadth of the nave, 41 feet. The length of the nave is 3 inches short of 200 feet ; that of the choir 167 feet 6 inches. The area at the crossing is a matter of 142 feet ; and the total breadth of the west front is 185 feet.

The cost of the cathedral, as built by Wren, was something over £750,000 pounds ; the exact sum has been stated to have been £736,752 2s. 4d., but this excludes the preliminary expenditure of nearly £11,000, and a similar sum for the stone and iron railing round the building. Altogether, with the recent expenditure, St. Paul's must have cost a round million.

A cathedral church differs from a parish church in that it does not primarily exist as a convenient place to which you and I may repair for worship of a Sunday morning. A parish church not only welcomes us but, in many instances, depends on us, and others like us, for its maintenance. The form of service, therefore, is of such an order that if we are reasonably intelligent we may take an active part in it. That parish churches differ greatly in the way in which they present their forms of worship is true ; we may attend a Sung Mass, a Choral Eucharist, or what is termed a 'choral celebration,' each differing considerably in the matter of its ceremonial and always conforming to the discretion of the priest in charge.

We may, on the other hand, attend a church where Matins is the chief morning thought—it does not signify ; any or all of these forms are available so long as we know where to look for them.

If we attend a cathedral service we do not regard ourselves as being parishioners. Neither do we experience the sensation of witnessing something that has been arranged specially for us, according to our way of thought. We must not expect to be considered in any way, unless perchance at a popular Sunday Evensong which may be rendered in the nave and not in the choir. Those cathedrals that have admitted such irregularities regard them as being without the confines of the statutory observances ;

in other words, they are extras, as are those services convened specially for broadcasting purposes.

The atmosphere of an English cathedral is, in the first place, one of strange detachment. The authorities do not refuse admittance to us, but neither do they invite us to attend; the staff exists merely to carry out certain obligations. These may vary in detail and form a little, but only a little; for the most part, they consist of a quiet celebration of the Holy Communion at an early hour, a choral rendition of Matins during the forenoon, an Evensong some time before dusk.

Our presence at either of the sung services is a matter of perfect indifference to the cathedral authorities; the only person who takes the smallest interest in us is, possibly, the verger who sees to it that if we enter the choir we sit exactly where he directs. If we sit in the nave he will probably consider us out of his jurisdiction altogether; he will not even notice us if we cough or scrape our chair, even though either action send a reverberation throughout the building. Such indiscretions are beneath his notice.

As for the rest of the staff, it is doubtful if any of them will be aware of our presence. Even the tiniest probationer will not dream of casting a glance in our direction; he is too busy learning to be a chorister.

An ordinary week-day Evensong in an English cathedral is exemplary from most points of view, and parish churches may model their own services on it if they wish; but nobody connected with the cathedral musical staff would suggest such a thing. These matters are of no interest. Evensong, to them, is part of a daily duty; it is a well-ordered, polite, formal, finely-poised expression. There is no religious fervour about it; that is an individual matter, and cathedrals do not deal in individualism.

Ecclesiastical law directs that there shall be a daily observance of Evening Prayer; the cathedral staff exists for the purpose of executing the law. Thus, by long use, the atmosphere of a cathedral has become essentially refined; it is unemotional and, above all, traditional.

If we are at all receptive we shall not fail to admire the

huge initial letters of the Collects as we find our place in a heavily-bound, large-printed Book of Common Prayer. We shall certainly not be able to avoid a feeling that an Evensong in 1932 must be very much the same as that on the corresponding day in 1832, or even in 1732 ; for all we know, exactly the same music may have been rendered in each case.

There is something peculiarly English about the effect of the Exhortation, rendered in its entirety by a Minor Canon monotoning on A natural ; if he sinks to F sharp for the General Confession it will merely be an indication of a change of thought. He will sing each sentence slowly and clearly ; the choir will copy him as nearly as possible and with the utmost precision. In a parish church you and I would take our part, especially as it is now the custom to say the Confession in the natural voice.

Cathedrals, however, do not change ; unless we are certain of that F sharp in our own voice, it will be as well that we listen to this formal confession of sins rather than attempt (other than mentally) to make a clean breast of our own.

The psalms will not be announced ; neither will the chants be played over. If you or I are unaware of the date of the month, that is our affair ; also cathedral choirs do not need to have tunes played over to them. The pointing is leisurely—so leisurely in some cases that it is almost impossible for a single syllable to be missed. The verses swing from side to side, from Decani to Cantoris and back again, with a regularity that is almost too polished. They give us the feeling that if one side suddenly broke down, the other would regard the matter with lofty disdain and proceed as though nothing had occurred. Such things, however, never occur ; the honour of coming to a standstill in the rendition of metrical psalms is left to inferior choirs in parish churches.

When, at last, the final *Gloria* is reached, there is a little orderly commotion occasioned by the closing of the psalters and the hoisting up of unwieldy scores of the Canticles, accompanied by a solemn little procession composed of the

head verger, with his mace of office, followed by the Dean, or one of the Canons in Residence, or (as in St. Paul's) by a Minor Canon for the purpose of reading the appointed lesson.

The perfect English of either Testament cannot be wholly lost upon the receptive listener as an ecclesiastical voice echoes down the nave, but nowhere is the real spirit of English Church tradition brought out more distinctively than in the singing of the *Magnificat*.

In an Anglo-Catholic church, whose spirit is so different from that of a cathedral, the Song of the Blessed Virgin is the supreme act at Evensong, and is marked by the wearing of copes and the swinging of a censer; in a cathedral, where advanced ritual is of little account, the Song is not sung to plain-chant, but to an intellectual medley of contrapuntal themes. The vigorous syncopation—this is real syncopation, not the travesty so apparent in the worst of our dance tunes—arrests the attention, as *Gibbons in F* or *Kelway in B Minor* are sung. The quaint, cold melodies are in perfect keeping with the carving on the choir stalls or the curve of an English arch. There is no emotion; the two sides of the choir grip their 'leads' without the least vocal strain. If the organ be used it is generally subdued.

It is the same thing when the anthem comes on. We shall be expected to stand throughout the rendering of one of good old Dr. John Blow's longest efforts, or perhaps one by Jeremiah Clarke, Dr. Boyce, Dr. Maurice Greene, or one of the other old stagers. It is only in 'Quires and Places' where they *can* sing that such monuments of English Church writing may be attempted; in an English cathedral these things are rendered with a perfection not to be found the world over.

After the *Grace* that closes the office for the day, the orderly procession files out to an improvisation on the organ that contains very little other than a few simple chords played on quiet stops until the staff has disappeared into the vestry. Then the organ swells and broadens; round diapasons and sonorous reeds, thunderings on the pedals fill the place with gorgeous noises while the music of the mighty John Sebastian Bach is almost hurled round the

building. Climax after climax is reached, effect after effect piled up, until the tubas are coupled down and the 32-feet pedal-stops grip the very foundations, the fugue ending in a roar that echoes for fully five seconds after the player's hands have left the keys.

Such music is worthy the surroundings ; the light and trivial organ music that finds favour in far too many parish churches and Nonconformist chapels is not recognized in a cathedral. I remember playing quite a harmless work by a modern French composer after Matins one morning in Advent, during my student days in an English cathedral ; I also recall that I was under suspicion for some weeks after, and regarded as though I were possessed of an unclean spirit.

Tradition is everything in a cathedral ; anybody who has worked in one can estimate fairly accurately what music will be sung on almost any day of the Church's year. On All Saints' Day, every year for five years, I heard ' I beheld, and lo, a great multitude,' by the aforementioned Dr. John Blow, sung at Evensong. It had probably been sung on that day ever since the good Doctor wrote it—in the days of Christopher Wren. Cathedral services have suffered little or no change in the last two and a half centuries.

That tradition brings with it a certain air of superior detachment is obvious to any one intimately acquainted with the inner workings of a cathedral. Each dignitary upholds his dignity ; he has little time or use for those in an inferior position. The Dean is the head, as supreme as an admiral ; the four Canons in Residence, each of whom reside in the precincts for three months in the year, go about their business and say their say at any meeting of the Chapter ; the Minor Canons do as they are told, seemingly without being told what to do ; the Precentor is generally their master and, in a sense, the Vicar of the cathedral.

The Precentor's duties bring him into touch and often into conflict with the *Magister Choristorum* (who is also the Organist), it being not always easy to determine where the Precentor's duty begins or where the Organist's ends.

The organists themselves—at least, those of the old school—seem traditionally cut out from the same pattern; they were, for the most part, refined and by no means unscholarly. They held the rest of the staff, with the possible exception of the Dean, in something like contempt. Minor Canons, to them, were nuisances and better avoided; unfortunately, their own devotion to duty caused organists occasionally to forget that they, too, could be nuisances.

I have seen a small party of relatives of a squealing infant gathered round the font in a dim corner of the great nave, patiently waiting for the Precentor to begin the Baptismal office, while the Organist has sent the *finale* of a Handel Organ Concerto thundering down the aisles in a fashion calculated to deprive any infant of its gumption. Yet nothing would be said; nothing *dare* be said. A postlude had to be played; if it proved to consist of three long movements, that was nobody's affair but the player's.

The very method of appointing organists, until fairly recently, was more than enough to bring about an atmosphere of this kind. An organist was sworn in for life. This did not necessarily mean that he could not be got rid of, but it made him extraordinarily safe. Were he found guilty of clearly-defined offences, such as sloth or inebriety, he would receive the first of three official 'warnings,' served upon him by the Chapter-clerk; even so he had, like the verger's cat, his other 'lives' to live.

The organ-loft was regarded as a place of terror by each articulated pupil as he arrived to be initiated into the mysteries of cathedral life. If he was impressed by the ability of his master to play the psalms and give vent to violent explosions of wrath at the tone of the boys at the same time, he was generally struck dumb with fright when asked to pull out (or push in) the Great to Pedal coupler at the exact moment required.

As the months fled by he would succeed in forgetting his fears until the day came when he played his first *Venite*. There would be no question of his playing the following psalms; he would be unceremoniously cannoned off the stool at the end of the *Gloria*, and would stand there

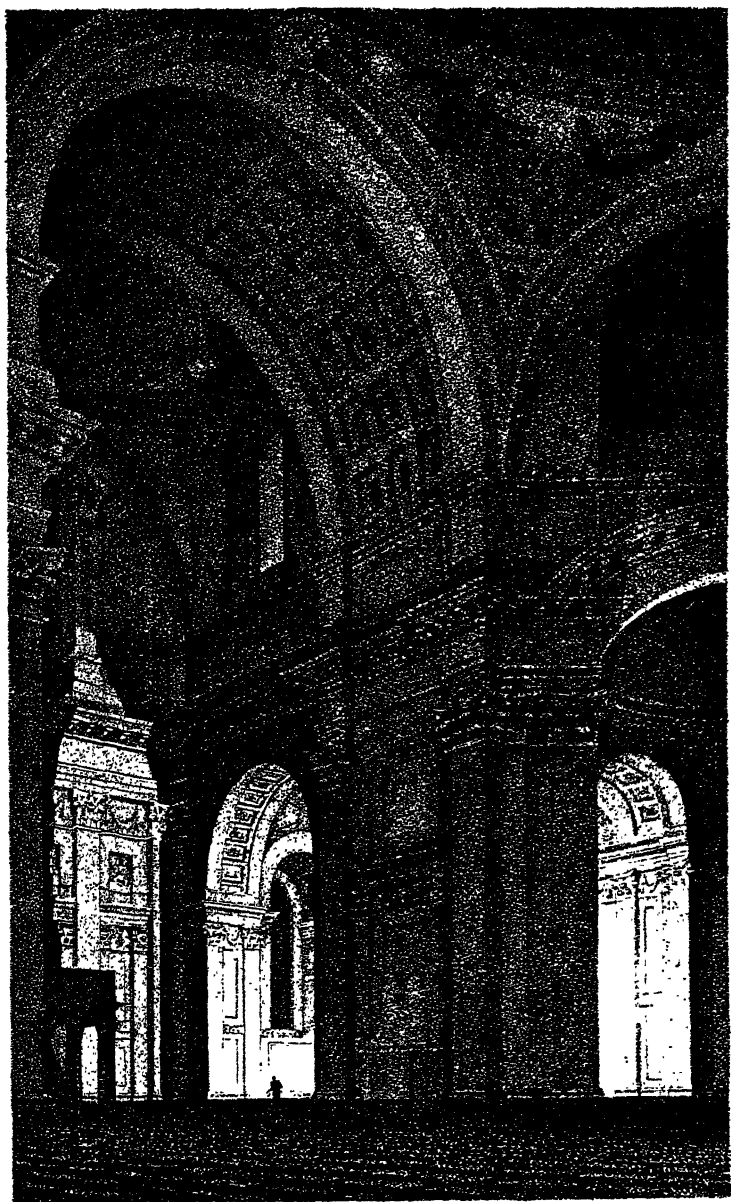
trembling, wondering if he would ever be allowed to play again, and whether the after-effects would be quite so unpleasant.

Everything in a cathedral goes as though by clockwork. You may stand in the north transept until only three minutes remain before the hour strikes in the mighty tower above you, and yet not encounter any of the staff. I never knew an Evensong in 'my' cathedral delayed by so much as twenty seconds. On the other hand, I never saw anybody on the staff entering the Chapter House more than a minute before the bell ceased ringing.

If you have ever had the opportunity of borrowing a private key, and have thus been enabled to enter a cathedral long after the sun has set and the moon has risen in her full glory, you may have known what it is to stand in the nave and appreciate *real silence*.

If you have experienced the thrill of playing on the great organ late at night, when the shadows cast by the moon in the transepts seem almost to be alive, when the slightest sound you have made has been magnified as though the place were filled with microphones and loud speakers, you will have known what the power of Sound can really be; you will have shuddered slightly as the throb of the deepest pedal notes assailed your senses. . . .

Such were my thoughts as I stood one afternoon in Wren's west gallery at St. Paul's listening to Evensong, to music he may himself have heard. I found myself wondering why it all seemed so English. And then my idle thoughts wandered back over a vista of years to the other cathedral I knew and loved; I thought of that throbbing silence once more, and in so doing confused the two issues; it seemed as though St. Paul's itself were dark and empty and echoing, and that the figure of honest Christopher Wren once again walked the nave of the house he had builded. Perhaps it was only the vastness of the place, the utter majesty of it . . . *his Symphony in Stone*.



SYMPHONY IN STONE

An impression, by Cecil Brown, of a section of St. Paul's Dome at night : a single light was burning at the head of the Crvot stairway

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CHAPTER XIII
THE PARISH CHURCHES

LONDON'S city churches, regarded entirely apart from West End or suburban churches, are unique ; where else in the world can we go and see half the number built by one man ?

A cynic might be forgiven for suggesting that no one wishes to ; but that does not alter the fact that when we are in a ' Wren church ' we realize that we are nowhere but in London, just as to stand in any provincial cathedral is to be forcibly reminded that we are nowhere but in England.

I have now made a complete survey (if I may make use of such a lofty term for what was, at the best, a careful study) of each of Wren's City churches, but before attempting to deal with any of them separately, I should like to record my general impressions in the belief that they may be some sort of guide to those who are interested enough to spend a few hours wandering about the City in order to absorb the thoughts of a very deep and refined intellect.

Naturally I had read everything written about the churches before visiting them. One point struck me very forcibly : nearly all the writers have complained of this or that church having ' suffered ' at the hands of ' bungling restorers.' The sum-total of the opinions, which I read with very great care, was that wherever a hand was laid upon Wren's work, a mistake of some kind was made.

If we allow such thoughts to be with us as we visit each of Wren's parish churches in turn, we shall scarcely know what to expect. Are we to be horrified (as apparently these good people were) or are we to take a broader view by realizing that, in many instances, alterations have

been made that can only be assigned to a change of Churchmanship? Surely, we must accept the Church as we find it in 1932, rather than as we know it to have been in, say, 1680.

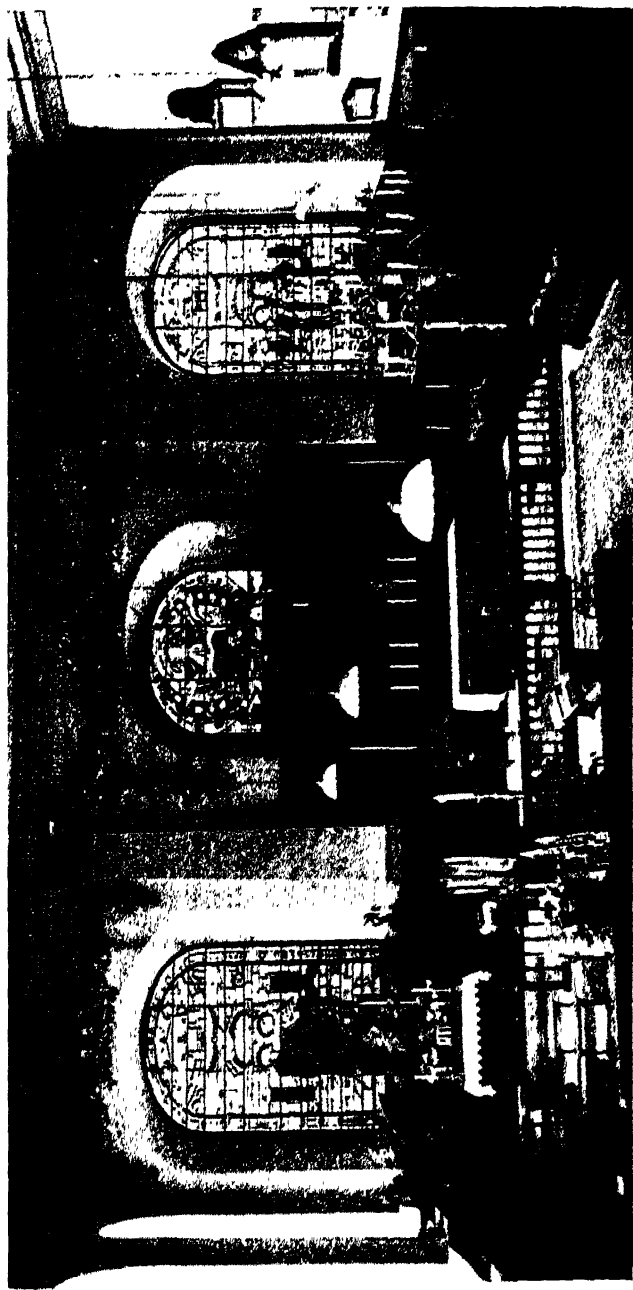
In Wren's day it was possible to regard the Church militant here in England as being roughly divided into three main sections. Roman Catholicism, supposedly overthrown at the Reformation, had been cropping up now and again at intervals ever since, and was yet to be flood-lighted, even if not actually brought into the full glare, in five years' time—namely, during that unpleasant period when an incompetent imbecile, generally known as James II, occupied the throne of England.

Then there was Nonconformity, by this time rather squashed and sorry for itself; *but it was there*. Lastly, there was the Church of England, badly shaken, but still smiling broadly. The so-called Church of England (better the Church *in* England) was almost as broad as its smile; it smiled because it had the full power of the Throne behind it, which, in the days of Charles II, amounted to a good deal.

Had Charles I treated with the Nonconformists he might have avoided the guillotine. Charles II had been 'restored' by both parties; consequently the Church, as he favoured it, was in full power in the days when Christopher Wren began building his parish churches.

Wren's own Churchmanship is easily understood. We have studied his upbringing and we know his character. Whatever our *own* views in the matter of Churchmanship, we know what *his* were. We therefore expect no provision for ritual in any shape or form. There will be no ambulatories for processions; there will be no building of sanctuaries designed for the use of three priests and attendant servers; no stained-glass windows to make the light religious because it was dim.

Had John Henry Newman lived in the time of Wren (supposing that he had been *allowed* to live, which is doubtful) Wren's City churches might have breathed a different spirit. As it was, they were typical of Church thought



ST. NICHOLAS COLE ABBEY
The central window is by Burne-Jones
(1677)



ST. STEPHEN'S, WALBROOK
Showing some of the famous slender pillars
(1672-1679)

in his day. St. Mildred's, Bread Street, is the only one of his that gives us an idea of what a church in the seventeenth century really looked like.

If we are going to visit Wren's churches with set views, either way, we shall certainly suffer disappointment. We shall find that it is essential for our mental comfort that we realize that these churches are in daily use, and that they conform to the policy each individual Rector has adopted. So that here we shall find an Evangelical who can conscientiously retain everything as Wren originally disposed it; there we shall discover that provision has been made for the various forms of ritual indispensable to Anglo-Catholicism, and that between these two extremes exists every conceivable mean.

Thus it will be as well if we disregard 'adaptations' in order that we shall experience no mental shock on finding St. Stephen's, Walbrook, with a Prayer Book resting upon what is no more than a ledge, any more than when our nostrils are assailed by the scent of incense at St. Magnus-the-Martyr, London Bridge.

This grumbling because Wren's churches have been added to, taken away from, restored, patched, or adapted to circumstantial requirements, will not bear examination for a moment of time. Architectural blunders have been made, it is true; there are many instances of bad taste hard to forgive, but it is only fair to say that, on the whole, the work of restoration or adaptation has been carried out with some thought, and that it has been conceived in a reverent spirit.

ST. STEPHEN'S, WALBROOK

(Built 1672-9. Tower added 1681. Domed)

Viewed externally, St. Stephen's is not very impressive. It has always been sadly encroached upon, probably more at the time it was built than now. The buildings adjoining it are all ugly, and Wren seems to have taken the opportunity to be particularly severe with regard to the outside. On the other hand, he had not too much money at his

disposal, and it may have been that he intended to devote the major portion to the interior, especially if it is really true that he had ideas of an experimental nature with regard to the dome.

He evidently was in an experimental mood because he has effected an impressive appearance of cruciformity by an ingenious disposition of the pillars. For a few seconds one is made to believe that the church is really cruciform, with nave and transepts complete, and if the illusion is dispelled immediately one catches sight of the walls, one is compensated for being tricked as the eyes are raised to the splendid dome.

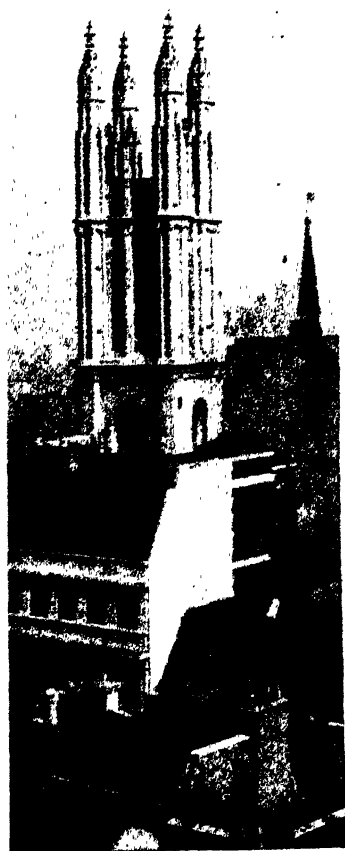
To look again at the pillars is to marvel at their slenderness and to wonder how the dome manages to avoid crashing down into the nave. Even Wren's friends thought that might happen. They told him that he had not given sufficient resistance to the thrust the dome was bound to exert. He, of course, was of another opinion.

I do not know whether Wren ever actually admitted that he was 'trying out' a dome as an experiment in order to gain experience for the great dome of St. Paul's when, at length, he should come to build it, but it has been said by many people (who say they know) that the dome of St. Stephen's *was* an experiment.

Wren met the criticisms in his usual fashion. He had worked it all out, he said, to his entire satisfaction; he assured everybody that the dome was as safe as the rest of the building. His friends hinted that his reputation was at stake—as though he did not know it—and suggested something more stable in appearance than what seemed to be very risky in the architectural sense.

Whether they made Wren really anxious or not is difficult to say. At all events, he took good care to be present to watch the removal of the scaffolding. When the last pole was taken away the dome was, seemingly, expected to fall in; nothing of the kind, however, happened, and Wren entered the church.

The story ends charmingly. The little party who had

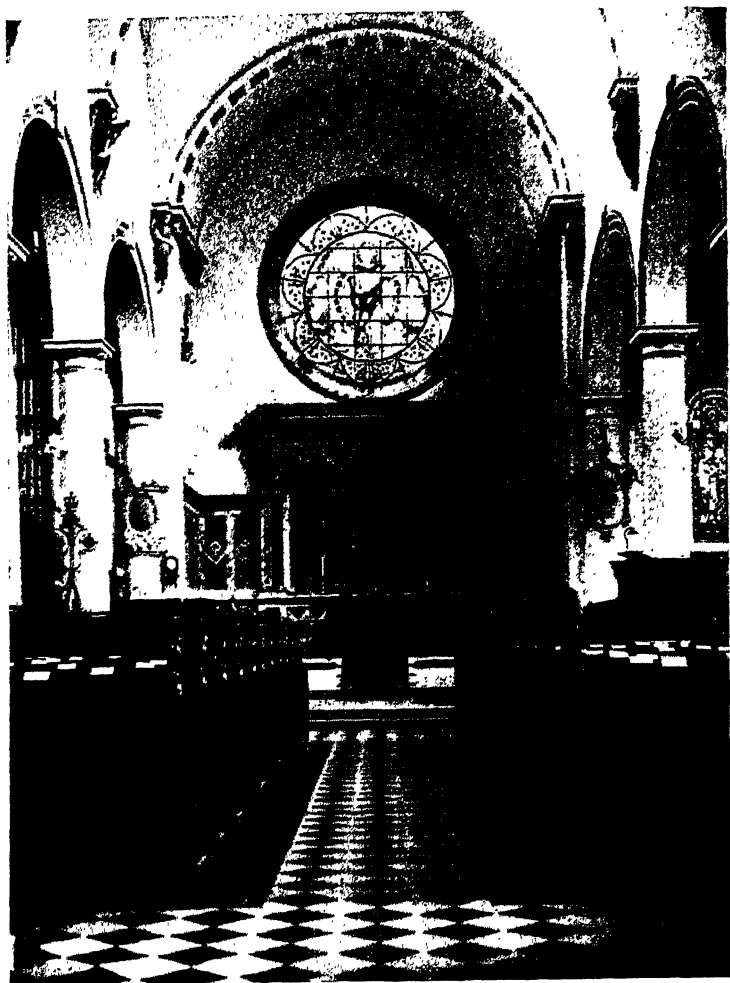


TWO GOTHIC TOWERS

St. Dunstan-in-the-East, one of
Wren's most perfect creations.
The church is not his

(1698-1699)

St. Michael, Cornhill, designed
when the Architect was
approaching his ninetieth
birthday
(1721)



ST. MICHAEL, CORNHILL, LOOKING EAST

The Reredos, by Sir Gilbert Scott, includes two paintings of Moses and Aaron by Streater, Sergeant Painter to Charles II. The pews, which are very beautiful, were carved by William Gibbe Rogers in 1860

(1672)

gathered to watch operations, together with the workmen, followed in a few moments' time. There they found Christopher Wren on his knees, giving thanks to a greater Architect that his work was worthy to stand for all time.

There is nothing mysterious about St. Stephen's, nor, one imagines, did Wren intend that there should be ; it is light and cheerful, and to visit it on a day when the sun streams into it is to be charmed with the sudden effects of black and white ; the organ case, for example, has a very dark appearance. The modern choir-stalls are better forgotten as soon as observed, but the addition of a lectern in Wren's style that is (at the moment of writing) being collected for, will be welcome.

ST. MICHAEL'S, CORNHILL

(Built 1672. Tower, 1721, in Gothic style. Galleried)

To be enthusiastic at eighty-nine is not given to all of us ; by that time we are generally thinking of our ailments and talking of the past. I can never think of Wren as having grown old ; when I look at the tower of St. Michael's, Cornhill, erected just before he was ninety years of age, I marvel at his young heart.

He was asked to build it in the Gothic style. His thoughts went back to the days when he lived in Oxford ; he thought of the beautiful tower at Magdalen, of the days that then seemed all-too-short, of the future to be devoted—not to architecture but to science. They must have seemed far away now that he had retired and given himself up to contemplation and study. Yet, when the order came for a Gothic tower for St. Michael's, he paid tribute to his beloved Oxford and sent a design resembling Magdalen's—sent it with a keenness that wholly belied his years. Wren is young again in that tower.

His four Gothic towers (St. Alban's, Wood Street, 1685 ; St. Dunstan-in-the-East, 1699 ; St. Mary Aldermary, 1711 ; St. Michael's, 1721) were, he said, ' not ungraceful, but ornamental to the east part of the city.' He had built

them, he admitted, only because he had been requested to, but he was not ashamed of them. St. Dunstan's tower is all that is Wren's own; the church is not his. It stands there, rather lonely, but exquisite.

The site of the 'Parysshe Church of Seynt Myghell in Cornehyll' must be one of the oldest in London, for a church of some kind has stood there for nearly nine hundred years. The interior of Wren's church has recently been decorated in elaborate style; as there has never been much in it that reminds one of Wren (since I have known it) the present decorations are best regarded on their merits alone. They make for a happy interior, and are not amiss in many respects.

The reredos does not altogether run quite smooth to the eye, but it has decided points. The glass in the church is not good; there is very little good glass anywhere in London, for that matter, most of it having been put in at a bad period. Stained-glass windows must be very good to be tolerable; there are many that might well have been shattered during the air raids on London, so long as wise churchwardens and sensible rectors replaced them with windows designed to let in God's good sunlight.

The pews in St. Michael's are not by Gibbons, but a casual observer might be forgiven for imagining that they were; they are very beautiful. The font is by him, the pelican being an attractive piece of work.

An ecclesiastical atmosphere of definite Churchmanship pervades St. Michael's; it is far more impressive, in this respect, than St. Stephen's, Walbrook.

ST. PETER'S, CORNHILL

(Built 1681-2. Galleried and Screened)

Traditionally, this is the most ancient ecclesiastical site in London, a church having been supposedly erected there as far back as A.D. 179. The immediate predecessor of Wren's church was of considerable size; it extended into the middle of what is now Gracechurch Street. It had a

square, battlemented tower, at the west end of which the foundations are those of Wren's tower.

The living of St. Peter's was once in the hands of the famous Richard (or Dick) Whittington, who eventually conveyed it to the Mayor and Corporation of London in whose gift it has remained ever since. After the Fire some attempt was made to restore it, without success, but Wren pulled it down in 1679 and rebuilt it.

St. Peter's is one of the two churches in which there is a screen—the other being St. Margaret's, Lothbury. Whether Wren actually designed either screen is a matter of doubt in my mind, but they seemed of that opinion at St. Peter's. The work is too spare and thin, to my way of thinking, to be his.

The recent decorations have probably horrified the Wren purists. They are a surprise, certainly, but after one has been in the church for a few moments they are not unpleasing. It was a daring act to pick out some of the arches in a delicate blue and to employ an equally delicate green for others, but the effect is not offensive. The pulpit has been cut down; also the high pews—a matter hardly worth mentioning as it has happened in most of Wren's churches.

Compared with St. Michael's, St. Peter's is decidedly sombre, but there is a majesty about its calm that is impressive. To revisit St. Michael's, which is only a few feet away, is to find it a little stimulating.

The parishioners of St. Peter's waited very patiently for their church, and were grateful to Wren for erecting a temporary tabernacle while it was being built. The registers of the church show that 'the churchwardens do present Dr. Wren with five guineas as a gratuity for his paines in the furtherance of a Tabernacle for this parish.'

In the vestry is preserved the two-manual console of an earlier organ on which Felix Mendelssohn played when in London in 1840. His signature below a line of music is a very good specimen. Mendelssohn was, of course, one of the greatest organists of his day.

ST. LAWRENCE JEWRY

(Built 1676. Not Galleried)

John Wilkins was Rector of St. Lawrence's for five years prior to becoming Bishop of Chester in 1668. It may have been that Wren desired to honour his old friend by erecting a church singularly rich in decoration; I feel certain that he took especial care with the charming vestry which is easily the finest he attached to any of his churches. Probably Wilkins saw the plans; that he would have taken interest in the erection of the church is more than likely.

St. Lawrence's is fortunate in being free on three sides out of the four, and Wren seems to have taken the opportunity of raising a particularly fine eastern elevation effectively adorned in portico fashion, complete with entablature and pediment. The western lobby, approached from Gresham Street, is in two parts connected by a high arch, the first half being domed and the second (which forms the basement to the tower) supporting an octagonal lantern.

The interior is, it must be admitted, a little secular; there is a distinct lack of ecclesiastical atmosphere. This may be due to the fact that Wilkins probably had something to do with its design; Erastianism has left an indelible mark.

It is not until one has been in the church for some moments, or has possibly heard the organ or witnessed a service, that one can dispel the idea of its being a meeting-place for religious discussions—something academical rather than ecclesiastical, an auditory rather than an oratory, or better still—a sanctuary.

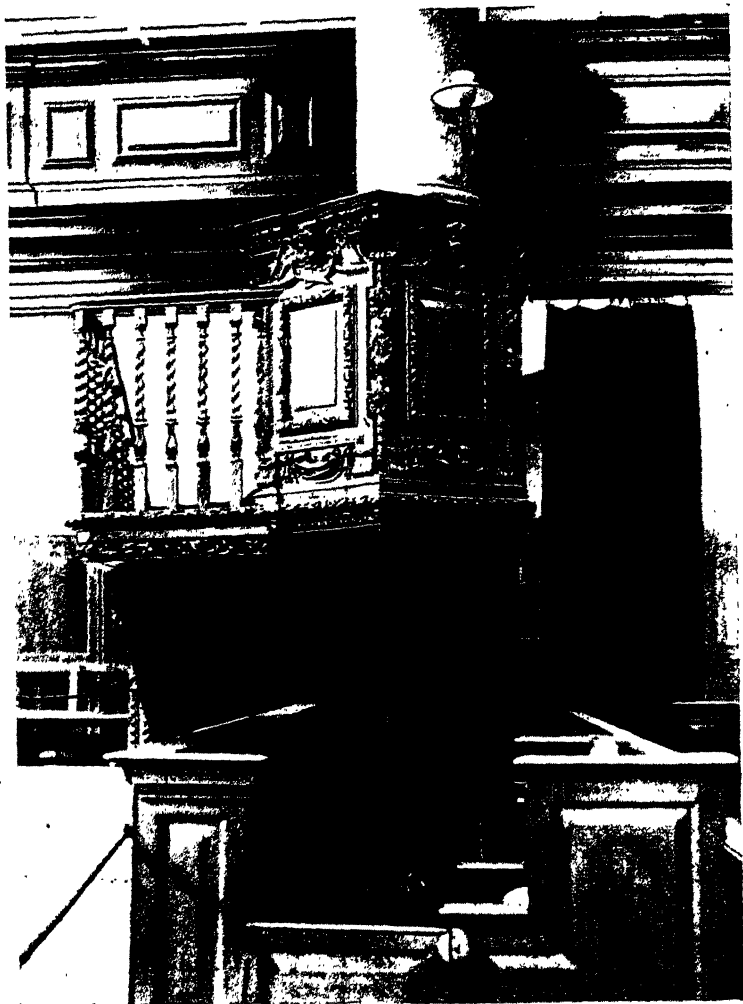
After a while this feeling wears off; one looks round and becomes interested in the handsome ceiling which curves down gracefully until met by the cornice, itself held up by fine Corinthian pilasters on the east and south, and by pillars on the north.

The vestry is one of the finest specimens of Wren's domestic architecture. The fireplace stands across one



VESTRY IN ST. LAWRENCE JEWRY

Note the painting of the torturing of St. Lawrence ; also the magnificent
carving by Grinling Gibbons
(1676)



CHRIST CHURCH, GREYFRIARS
(NEWGATE STREET)

The pulpit, a fine specimen of the incomparable art of Wren's Master-Carver, Grinling Gibbons, was brought from the Temple in 1839

corner, over which is a startling picture of the torturing of St. Lawrence, set in a panel of acanthus moulding in low relief and surmounted by a handsome carved ornament.

Thé cornice is magnificent as, indeed, is the carving above the door; the ceiling is painted and is one of the finest I have seen. The whole room, small as it is, seems in perfect proportion, but to return to the church is to sense the academic once more. I always have the feeling that I would rather play Bach in that church than accompany a Choral Eucharist.

CHRIST CHURCH, GREYFRIARS (NEWGATE STREET)

(Built 1687. Steeple, 1704. Galleried)

During the reign of Henry VIII the 'Church of the Late Grey Friars was re-founded as a parish Church called Christ's Church within Newgate.' Wren's church only occupies the site of the choir of the original Friar's church; even so, it is one of his largest. The tower is very typical of Wren at this period; one regrets the loss of its vases for, once it is realized that the tower did actually possess them, they are missed.

Christ Church was considerably altered in 1896, when one of two pulpits was removed and the panels used for the front of the choir stalls; one of these panels contains the names of the rectors since the time of Henry VIII. The other pulpit is a fine specimen of Gibbons; it was brought to the church from the Temple in 1839.

In 1837 Mendelssohn played the Great A Minor Fugue, by J. S. Bach, and several other works on the Renatus Harris organ—since enlarged and reconstructed. An amusing story is told of this recital at Christ Church. W. S. Rockstro and Vincent Novello were sitting together in the nave, listening to the concluding item of a brilliant programme, which took the form of an improvisation.

Mendelssohn's improvisations were always to be marvelled at, and on this occasion he seemed in exceptional form. After a few moments the two musicians noticed a persistent *A natural* sounding through Mendelssohn's

playing, and concluded that he was struggling with a cipher which obstinately refused to be 'knocked off.' At any rate, the note continued to sound.

Both Rockstro and Novello thoroughly enjoyed the musicianly way in which Mendelssohn treated the offending note ; chord after chord (all containing the A, of course) floated round the building. All that troubled the two musicians was that when, at length, Mendelssohn would be forced to conclude the improvisation, the note would continue to sound and thus spoil the effect, besides informing the congregation that something was wrong with the organ.

Suddenly, however, the A sank to A flat, then to G, then to F sharp, and the organ-point faded away in the most musicianly manner possible. As Mendelssohn joined the other two in Newgate Street, after the recital was over, his face wore a mischievous expression. 'You fellows thought that note was a cipher, I know you did,' said he, bursting into merry laughter at the thought of the artistic trick he had played upon two clever musicians.

I thought of this story of Mendelssohn as I entered Christ Church, whose handsome ceiling immediately attracted my attention as it always has. It is very graceful and, being clean-looking, seems to lend a happy atmosphere to the whole building. The columns are raised upon panelled bases and reach to the cornice. These panelled bases are high enough to support a low gallery, the charm of which device is one of the features of the church. The groined ceiling springs very gracefully from the cornice ; the ceiling over the galleries is flat and divided into squares.

The church marks a distinct progress in Wren's style ; well it might, for by the time it was finished, St. Paul's was probably fairly high above the ground, and Wren had had considerable experience in building other churches. There is a faint air of mystery in Christ Church, just a suspicion of the elements of worship, even when it is empty ; perhaps it is the presence of a modern altar which, with its changeable frontals, is an incongruity that must be forgiven on sacerdotal grounds.

ST. MARY ALDERMANBURY

(Built 1677. Not Galleried)

The deeply-vaulted roof is the most dominating feature in St. Mary's; it is impossible not to admire it. The church has undergone considerable change since Wren rebuilt it—two doors, one each side of the altar, having been walled up. The south-west window has been enlarged to correspond with the rest; unfortunately, some imbecile has inserted heavy tracery.

After the declaration of peace (1920-21) £5000 were spent in restoring and redecorating. The pews, of the mid-Victorian type, were removed and oak seats, brought from St. Alphage's, London Wall (once a separate parish but amalgamated with St. Mary's in 1917), were installed in their places. As the reredos and altar rails, as well as a heavy stone pulpit, were in disrepair, these were taken away and St. Alphage's furniture used instead.

St. Mary's may not be one of the most inspiring of Wren's churches, but it does not leave a bad impression on the mind. The addition of a Memorial Chapel reminds one of the fact that Wren did not provide side-chapels; there was no use for such things in his day. Anything that might be construed into being dedicated to the Blessed Virgin found no favour with Churchmen in the reign of Charles II.

Incidentally, Judge Jeffreys, who died in the Tower, was ultimately buried in a vault under the altar in 1693. Holman Hunt, the painter of *The Light of the World* was born in Love Lane, in this parish. The registers also record the second marriage of John Milton in 1656.

ST. MARY-LE-BOW (BOW CHURCH), CHEAPSIDE

(Built 1671-3. Steeple, 1680. Galleries removed)

One of Wren's best known churches, St. Mary-le-Bow, presents an impressive spectacle from the opposite pavement of Cheapside. It had to wait nearly ten years before the parishioners could afford a steeple for it; but when, at

last, the money was forthcoming, and Wren found time to erect it, surely it must have been to the complete satisfaction of everybody concerned, for it is one of his most beautiful. The lower part is a little plain, perhaps, and I personally should like to see the clock removed ; the base of the tower is practically without ornament except for the tympana of the doorways, which are sculptured, and for the flanking pillars which afford a little relief, the plainness being an excellent foil to what appears above.

To raise the eyes to a higher level is assuredly to admire the subtle manner in which Wren has contrived to hide his sudden transition from the square ground-plan to the delicate colonnade, or peristyle, in which he has built a cylindrical stone drum. The columns act as a support to the next cornice, above which is an attractive little balustrade bound to the core by arched buttresses. This, again, supports a second, and really pretty little peristyle which itself is surmounted by an obelisk carrying the vane.

If the reader will use a glass on the picture given here he will appreciate the above description of a very beautiful piece of work. If his impression, on visiting Bow Church, is that its beauty is without rather than within, he should realize that the whole place is crying out for money to be spent on it.

At the moment of writing, a large sum is being appealed for. The galleries have been removed, with what effect it is difficult to say. There is a fine vaulted roof, and the Gibbons pulpit is one of his best ; in fact, the carving generally is good. The doors are particularly attractive. One day Bow Church will no doubt be very attractive from the ecclesiastical point of view ; so long as common sense be used, it may be possible to impart brilliance without gaudiness.

ST. BRIDE'S, FLEET STREET

(Built 1680. Steeple, 1700. Galleried)

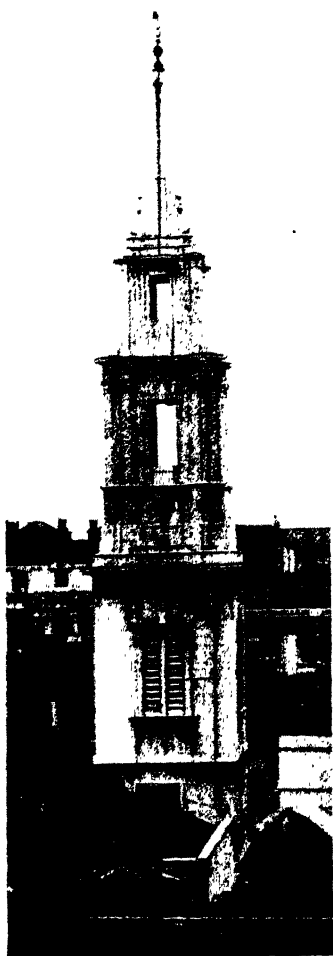
The tower and spire of St. Bride's were not built until twenty years after the church was opened for worship.



A GEM IN RENAISSANCE

The Tower of St. MARY-LE-BOW, Cheapside, taken from a roof in
Bow Lane

(1680)



St. Vedast, Foster Lane, taken
from a roof in St. Martin-le-Grand



St. Bride, Fleet Street, taken from
a roof in Salisbury Square

A STUDY IN CONTRAST

Looking at the Warrant Design of the cathedral, and then at the tower of St. Bride's, I am inclined to suggest that Wren might have told the parishioners that their steeple was 'a present from St. Paul's.'

That steeple, in my imagination, was what he was bound to erect at *some* time in his career. Having sketched out an idea for the base of it, he seems to have said to himself: 'I know what I shall do; I shall have three more of these, each one smaller than the one below it, and then a thin spire on top,' for that is the construction of the steeple of St. Bride's.

The steeple in the Warrant Design had six little 'compartments'; that erected on St. Bride's had to be content with four. I look upon this steeple as one of the most perfect specimens of Renaissance architecture of its kind in London—perhaps in the world.

The interior of St. Bride's is a little stimulating, so far as its decorations are concerned; some writers have considered the whole scheme to be secular, one going so far as to liken it to a West-End restaurant. While I cannot admire all I found in it in this respect, I was struck with the immense windows in the north and south walls; in fact, the fenestration generally is a feature of the church.

The gallery is somewhat overbearing. Wren, in his later churches, submitted to orders regarding the necessity of galleries, and took to designing them as part and parcel of the general architecture; here he seems to have propped his gallery upon pilasters in rather a clumsy way. It may be an erroneous impression on my part, but I feel that Wren was annoyed at having to erect a gallery in St. Bride's.

The final impression on my mind, whenever I have visited St. Bride's, is the same; I prefer to crane my neck in Ludgate Circus, or to stand on the opposite side of Fleet Street, and there take a long view of the steeple, than to contemplate the interior which always gives me the impression of being an ideal place in which to contract a runaway marriage. Perhaps this latter thought is a piece of immature reasoning connected by thought-association with the name of the church.

The name St. Bride, incidentally, is more accurately St. Bridget, and the church records go back to the thirteenth century. Pepys was baptized in St. Bride's, and Milton lived for some time in a house overlooking the churchyard.

ST. CLEMENT DANES, STRAND

(Built 1680. Steeple (by Gibbs), 1719. Galleried)

The 'Oranges and Lemons' church. I have found no definite reason why Wren asked his pupil Gibbs to build the tower and steeple, unless it was that his own health was beginning to give way. Wren, at the time, was eighty-six, which, even with him, is likely to have accounted for something, despite the fact that he cheered up wonderfully at the prospect of building a tower for St. Michael's, Cornhill, shortly before his ninetieth birthday. The syllable *Gibb* must have meant something for Wren: Grinling Gibbons served him for most of his life and, much later, the handsome pews in St. Michael's were carved by William Gibbe Rogers.

In any case, James Gibbs must have thoroughly satisfied Wren, for the tower and spire of St. Clement's could not have been more beautiful had Sir Christopher himself done the work.

Of all the galleried churches Wren built, none is so effective as St. Clement's. The advance in the matter of construction, when compared with St. Bride's, makes comparison indeed odious. Wren *stuck* his gallery into St. Bride's; here he let it *grow out of the walls*. It is an ornament, a piece of ecclesiastical ritual, almost. It rests upon its own wainscotted pilasters, the gorgeous roof being borne by a charming, but small order of Corinthian columns whose bases stand upon the front book-desk of the gallery itself.

Everywhere one gazes, a mass of graceful curves meets the eye, the ornamentation being so elaborate as to demand prolonged study to appreciate its beauty to the full. The bay leading to the apse is particularly fine, and the coffering



THE EAST END OF ST. CLEMENT DANES, STRAND
The Gibbons carving in this church is perhaps more elaborate than
in any other
(1680)



WREN'S GOTHIC :

ST. MARY ALDERMARY, LOOKING EAST

Note Wren's modification of the Gothic style in his arches, particularly the central one. The screen in the foreground is modern

(1682)

of the semi-dome over the apse itself is most fascinating. For once, I was forced to adore a gallery which, with the general effect of the carving everywhere, brings about a dignity that Wren rarely approached in his parish churches.

St. Clement Danes has been converted to Anglo-Catholicism—very happily so. The east end, in consequence, has assumed a devotional aspect that hallows the whole building. The carving on the choir stalls, the figures in particular, lend an additional dignity.

The last time I saw it, it chanced to be on Easter Eve, when it was ablaze with daffodils and narcissi, and, though I am personally never very enthusiastic about floral decorations in churches, I sensed the atmosphere of Easter as I watched the solemnization of a quiet, but charming little wedding.

“Oranges and lemons,” says the bells of St. Clement’s;

“You owe me five farthings,” says the bells of St. Martin’s.

I shall go on March 31, one year, and watch the children being presented with oranges and lemons. . . .

ST. MARY ALDERMARY

(Built 1682. Tower rebuilt 1711. Gothic)

To enter St. Mary Aldermary, if casually, is to say to one’s self: ‘*This* is not Wren, of course!’ The clustered pillars, the sumptuous tracery in the roof and windows—the former exceedingly beautiful—combine to put one off the scent, so to speak.

If it so happens that the visitor chances to note the pointed arch at the base of the tower, even though he may have stood to admire the exterior from the street before entering (wondering where, exactly, Wren began his work on it) he will be mystified if he espies that pointed arch before looking down the nave.

The instant he gazes eastward he will catch sight of the flattened arches, the one over the sanctuary in particular, and will find himself smiling and saying: ‘How like Wren!’

Even if the visitor knows beforehand that the Surveyor was requested to erect a church on similar lines to that which had perished in the Fire ; even if he goes so far as to imagine that what was left of the tower was pointed out as a guide (in case Wren had forgotten, or did not know what the original church looked like) he will *still* find himself sorting out his impressions.

With all his dislike of ' Gothick ' and what he called its ' Rudeness,' Wren might have been a wonderful architect in that style had he entertained more sympathetic views. The whole church here seems to say, on behalf of its Architect : ' Well, this is *my* idea of Gothic ; I have flattened out what I thought too pointed, but you must admit the result is not amiss.'

That Wren's Gothic has been laughed at is common knowledge. There is nothing to laugh at in St. Mary's, even though one may indulge in a chuckle, here and there, as one espies certain modifications Wren has effected, knowing his feelings about Gothic principles in architecture.

A visit to St. Mary's must strengthen one's view of Wren. Had Gothic, and only Gothic, been insisted upon for St. Paul's and the churches, Wren would have been honest, as he always was, and have told King Charles to enlist the services of some one else.

Wren could have been anything he wanted to ; his interest in science and astronomy alone, apart from his keenness about his inventions, would have been enough to sustain him all the days of his long and honourable life. As it was, he built what Gothic he was *made* to build, and with his customary courtly grace ; if he flattened out an arch, here and there, or rounded off the Tom Tower at Oxford with a Renaissance top, it was but the thoughts of a classic mind.

St. Mary's has *really* suffered from the activities of restorers ; it is hard to forgive some one for that screen at the west end. My little boy, aged nine, visited this church with me, and told me the screen just referred to reminded him of something he had seen at Waterloo Station, suggesting the addition of a notice-board signify-

ing the arrivals or departures of the trains would make it more realistic. He did not express the sentiment in those words, but that was what he meant to convey.

There is a coldness about St. Mary's—literally, the day we visited it, for the heating apparatus was evidently not working—which may possibly have come about by accident, or by desire on Wren's part to carry out the wishes of the parishioners; it is unmistakable, whatever may be the truth about the causes of it. On the other hand, St. Mary's *is a church*; there is no feeling that it might have been convened for the purpose of an occasional meeting of the Royal Society or a Gresham lecture. To compare (or, perhaps, to contrast) it with St. Lawrence Jewry or St. Stephen's, Walbrook, is a little hard; even so, the comparison arises at once in a retentive mind.

ST. MARY ABCHURCH

(Built 1686. Domed)

St. Mary Abchurch is built of red brick with stone quoins, not of Portland Stone throughout in the fashion of St. Lawrence's, for example. The exterior is plain to the last degree, Wren apparently having decided not to embellish the brick walls by festoons of carved flowers as at St. Benet's, Paul's Wharf.

The interior is a place of eternal artificial light; at least, it should be employed when the church is required for service; it is not until the verger switches on electric lights that it is possible to see anything at all clearly, the tall buildings in the near vicinity taking most of the available daylight. Consequently, if one wishes to see the attractive painting of *The Adoration of the Deity*, by Sir James Thornhill (the artist who painted the ceiling of the inner dome at St. Paul's) a request must be made to the verger to flood-light it. Then the effect is extraordinarily good.

Here is a fine example of the effective use of pendentives as a means of transition from practically a square ground-plan to a circular dome, double-groined vaults appearing

in the ceiling at each corner. I noticed much the same thing at St. Swithin's, London Stone (Cannon Street).

The cornice in St. Mary's is beautifully moulded, and the dome itself is lighted to a certain degree by four oval windows. The pews have been cut down, but less has been done to alter this church from Wren's original planning than any other, with the exception of St. Mildred's, Bread Street.

The reredos and pulpit are indeed stately and imposing ; the altar has, however, been adapted to modern requirements. To my mind, it is too small and insignificant-looking ; there is a fine sense of space in St. Mary's, and it is regrettable that width has not been the central thought in designing the altarpiece.

St. Swithin's, Cannon Street (1678-9) resembles St. Mary Abchurch in several respects, but the dome, in this instance, is octagonal. The effect of the whole church is not appealing ; it is very dingy, for one thing, and contains a perfectly hideous heating apparatus, shaped like a huge copper and faced with glazed tiles. Unless one has actually seen this atrocity, it is hardly possible to realize the vulgarity of it.

Another domed, and quite dignified structure, is St. Mary-at-Hill (1672-7), close to Love Lane, where Wren is supposed to have lived for some time. Unfortunately, this church has suffered from irreverent usage. Painted in large letters on the exterior of the south wall is the following which, I imagine, speaks for itself :

PICTORIAL ART BY ELECTRIC LIGHT, WITH MUSIC.

Daily 1.15 to 1.45, except Saturdays and Sundays.

Bring your own lunch !

The Sunday ritual includes the following :

9 a.m. Holy Communion.

3.30 p.m. Conversation Class and Sunday-school Class.

6 p.m. Concert with Magic Lantern.

7 p.m. Lantern Evensong.

8 p.m. Open Meeting.



ST. MARY ABCHURCH

The north-east corner of the building, showing Wren's use of pendentives (*see* p. 144), by which he effects a transition from a rectangular ground plan to a circular base for the dome above. The dome in St. Mary's is well worth seeing; it can be flood-lighted to render visible Sir James Thornhill's beautiful paintings

(1686)



AFTER CONVERSION TO ANGLO-CATHOLICISM :
THE EAST END OF ST. MAGNUS-THE-MARTYR, LONDON BRIDGE
(1676)

(See p. 188)

My feelings on leaving St. Mary-at-Hill were that, as it is so desecrated, it is a pity the Union of City Benefices Act was not used to bring about its demolition. It is amazing that Prebendary Carlile, or the present incumbent, can lend themselves to this sort of thing. However keen one may be upon instructing those whose intellect is of necessity of a low order, there is a limit to indignity. (A magic-lantern screen hangs in front of the altar.) The church is beautiful and, in a sense, peaceful ; it is regrettable that it is thus vulgarized.

It is a relief to leave it and walk up the hill to visit St. Margaret Pattens (1687) in order to see the famous canopied pew, unique in London and rare in England generally. The circular windows, those at the west end particularly, are inclined to let in light where one does not expect it, but there is an ecclesiastical effect produced by the general fenestration of the church. The tower is an excellent example of Wren in a severe mood.

St. Stephen's, Coleman Street (1676), stands over one of the plague pits. The east window is a copy of Rubens's *Descent from the Cross*. It was blown in (so the Rector told me) during an air raid, but was subsequently replaced, being unveiled on November 26, 1917, in the presence of the Chaplain-General of the Forces. The sanctuary contains some fine Renaissance chairs, and the furniture generally is of the best. St. Stephen's strikes one as being a live church, due largely to the untiring energies of its Rector. It is well worth a visit.

St. Margaret's, Lothbury, is one of the few one-aisled churches Wren built. The obvious procedure seems to have been to complete the aisle by allowing it to lead to an altar ; this has been done here as well as at St. Margaret Pattens.

The chief feature of St. Margaret's, Lothbury (1690), is the screen brought to it when All-Hallows, Thames Street, was pulled down. The screen is not the work of Gibbons, but the pulpit, an interesting specimen, is by him. The gallery came from St. Olave's, Jewry, so that

St. Margaret's has indeed been fortunate. The screen impressed me as being finer than the one in St. Peter's, Cornhill, but it is difficult to make a nice comparison without going from one to the other for the purpose.

St. Alban's, Wood Street (1685), is, frankly, not worth visiting. It is Gothic, and interesting on that account, but it is dark and utterly forbidding. It is certainly not a church to recommend to any student of Wren's architecture.

St. Vedast's, Foster Lane (1695), is also rather dark, but fascinating to the last degree. There is a sense of peace, and even of worship, rather difficult to describe. I have seen it several times, and have always been impressed with it. The stone steeple is one of Wren's masterpieces.

Another church almost lying in the shadow of St. Paul's is the smallest of all—St. Faith's (1683; spire, 1695). It seems like a little box after some of the larger churches, but its vaulted ceiling, in which there are some curious-looking lights, give it quite an atmosphere of its own. The paint on the bases of the pillars is a crime, but otherwise there is little to complain of.

The suggestion of cruciformity, so apparent in St. Stephen's, Walbrook, is the striking feature of St. Martin's, Ludgate Hill (1684-5), the interior of which is perfectly charming. The deception does not last so long as at St. Stephen's; one soon sees through the device, and yet is not irritated at having done so.

The device is, all the same, exceedingly clever. Pillars support an entablature coming well forward into the body of the church, the barrel-vaults (which spring from it), intersecting in the centre and forming a cross-vault. The leaden spire of St. Martin's rather interrupts the view of St. Paul's from the bottom of Fleet Street, but as the hideous railway arch does the same thing, and a deal more unpleasantly, the point must remain a small one.

SS. Anne and Agnes, Aldersgate, is constructionally very similar to St. Martin's, the columns in either case standing upon high bases level with the wainscots against the walls. St. Martin's is generally to be found open in the

middle of the day ; it is pleasant to enter it and sit awhile, especially on a hot day.

Just as St. Faith's is the smallest, so is St. Andrew's, Holborn, the largest of Wren's churches. This is not one of those affected by the Fire, but when it became necessary to rebuild, Wren was offered a more generous site, at the head of Holborn Viaduct, than he had been offered for most of his churches further east. Money was not too plentiful ; Parliament had confiscated most of what had been reserved for the rebuilding of St. Andrew's, which accounts for some of its austerity. The east windows attract the attention at once ; they are by Joshua Price. The altar, partly of porphyry, is also noteworthy.

The scheme of decoration is a little sharp to the eye ; the pillars, coated with black 'marble' paint, shine somewhat obtrusively. On the other hand, there is nothing flagrantly inartistic. In a few years' time, when it has all toned down, the effect will be quite pleasing.

St. Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe (1692), with its groined ceilings, is one of the 'cheaper' churches ; Wren was cut down very much in the matter of the cost. It is plain, but not without atmosphere. The gallery was allotted to the parishioners of St. Ann's, Blackfriars, when it was decided not to build that church after the Fire ; the gallery at Christ Church, Newgate Street, was reserved specially for the boys of Christ's Hospital.

Facts such as these do indeed tend to show how important the rebuilding of the City churches was at the time. I suppose we could do without most of them in these days ; judging by the attendances, it would seem that five out of the original fifty would now suffice the City of London. In the days of Christopher Wren each man, woman, and child worshipped at his parish church—and *only* there ; in these days they worship anywhere or, more often, nowhere. Consequently, not all the City churches are open on Sunday ; St. Mary Aldermary is one that only opens in the week-time.

All-Hallows, Barking-by-the-Tower, is an interesting two-aisled church. The idea of two side-aisles is said to

have arisen from an expressed desire by the Black Prince that churches should thus symbolize the Blessed Trinity. All-Hallows possesses some splendid carving.

Other isolated points of interest are the remarkably fine painting at the east end of St. James's, Garlickhithe (1677-83), and some of the carving at St. Edmund, King and Martyr, Lombard Street (1689-90). St. Nicholas, Cole Abbey (1677) has lost a little by conversion to Anglo-Catholicism—at least, from Wren's point of view—but it has the appearance of being alive. It is not too inspiring, though the Burne-Jones window over the altar is worth studying.

Conversion to Anglo-Catholicism has altered the appearance of St. Magnus-the-Martyr, London Bridge (near the Monument), out of all recognition. The church now presents an admirable spectacle from the ritualistic point of view, but adherents to Wren's type of Churchmanship can only regard what was done in 1920 with very mixed feelings. The church has certainly been beautified in many respects, but the only way in which one can extract pleasure from an examination of the recent work is to forget that Wren ever had anything to do with it. St. Magnus was built in 1676, the steeple being added in 1705.

The church is a live wire ; I chanced to be present at a sung Mass—very well sung, too—and was surprised to find the building practically full, which is saying something, especially at the foot of stinking Fish Street Hill on a Saturday morning. Elsewhere I found little to impress me regarding the activities of the churches ; Wren lives in much of what remains that is beautiful, but the churches are dead—dead as so much mutton.

We cannot but marvel at Wren's personal activity in rebuilding those fifty churches ; that he was patient when pestered by the parishioners of each of them, everybody asking for their own temples to be built regardless of their neighbours, is an historic fact.

It is equally amazing how much variation he contrived to effect in their construction, even in those that have similar features. They all represented one ideal—that of

the Church in his day. He probably never greatly concerned himself at the turn events were taking when James II did his utmost to upset the constitution of England by placing a Catholic in every important office in the land, any more than he did when 'High Church' and 'Low Church' became the fashion in the time of William and Mary.

He went on solidly with his task of building his Renaissance churches. He never sought preferment, like the Vicar of Bray, by being all things to all kings; he continued to raise a dome here, a leaden steeple or a stone lantern there, with complete unconcern as to what would ultimately be the fate of the Church.

He laid out the money that was given him to the best advantage. When he came to build St. James's, Piccadilly (1683), he had to admit that it had 'no walls of the second order, nor lanterns nor buttresses, but the whole roof rests upon the pillars as do the galleries—the cheapest of any form that I could invent.' The church cost £8500, and was built at the command of Lord St. Albans with whom, it will be remembered, Wren spent some time in Paris in 1665. The dedication to St. James was in compliment to James II, though scarcely, one supposes, as a recognition of any saintliness in that thoroughly disreputable monarch. Strangely enough, St. James's was always one of Wren's own favourites; he considered the planning of it eminently suitable for a parish church. The tower is not his.

It is not a matter of wonder that Wren built the churches before the towers in many instances. Bow Church had to wait nearly ten years, Christ Church seventeen, St. Bride's twenty, St. Magnus thirty, and St. Michael's nearly forty years for their several towers and steeples. Two only did he leave to others, as already stated—St. Clement Danes, and St. James's, Piccadilly.

In this informal review of the churches, I am conscious that I have omitted much that others have pointed out. Nevertheless, I trust that what I have written here may be at least some sort of guide to those who at any time feel inclined to study such varied products of one brain.

In my wanderings I met many charming Rectors, all of whom had something to tell me; that will probably be the experience of any who undertake a pilgrimage of this nature. None of the Rectors could explain the emptiness of their churches except by saying that 'nobody lives here now.' St. Magnus, London Bridge, needed no such defence; none of its congregation looked to me as though they lived on Fish Street Hill—but there they were, a church full of them!

I should indeed be ungrateful if, at this point, I did not acknowledge the courtesy of the various Vergers, who seemed so well informed. In some cases they proved to be 'Vergeresses,' who were equally courteous—even to the dear old dame who enthusiastically (but, I fear, erroneously) informed me that 'Sir Christopher 'ad Hadded a Hapse at the Heast end.'

The cost of the churches naturally varied considerably. It would indeed make dull reading to give the figures of all of them, but a few, here and there, may serve to give an idea of the average cost. Bow Church tower cost £7388, and the church itself £8071, making a total of £15,459. St. Bride's, Fleet Street (both tower and church) cost less—a matter of £11,430. St. Lawrence Jewry was a little more expensive than St. Bride's; it cost the parishioners £11,870.

The last figures serve to show how much more was spent on Bow tower than on that of St. Lawrence; on the other hand, Wren spent more on decoration at St. Lawrence; relatively speaking, the church cost more than St. Mary-le-bow. St. Stephen's, Walbrook, all told, cost very little more than Bow tower; the figures, in this case, are £7652.

Wren was always generous; he built Greenwich Hospital free of all charge. 'Let me have some share in an act of charity and mercy,' was all he said when asked what his fee would be. It was the same thing at St. Clement Danes. He happened to learn that the parishioners were hardly able to bear the cost of the erection of their church; he therefore gladly waived his fee.

Not that he could afford to be so generous; perhaps generosity is not generosity when one *can* afford to be

generous. In his case it must be remembered that his fees were very moderate ; he charged 5 per cent. on the value of the building. The total cost of Wren's churches amounted to something over £263,000 ; it has been computed at £263,786 10s. 4½d., but how that figure was arrived at, or whether it is correct, I am not prepared to say.

If Wren made a round £13,000 out of his churches, it is all he could have made. As for St. Paul's, he received about £7000 over a period of thirty-five years. Even then the so-called authorities held back half his salary towards the end ; that, however, is a story yet to be told, and one that is, to me, difficult to relate calmly.

For the parishioners' sakes he saved money where he could ; it was a rare thing for Wren to pull down a wall that could possibly stand. He always gave the best advice ; he recommended Portland stone everywhere he went, and oak for a roof, 'because it will bear some negligence.'

Wren's opinion of the average churchwarden was, apparently, not of the highest. He considered that they 'set up their names, but neglect to preserve the roof over their heads.' As a matter of fact, wood for the roofs was not always easy to obtain. 'The wars in the North Sea,' said Wren, 'make timber at present of excessive price. I suppose, ere long,' he continued, 'we must have recourse to the West Indies where most excellent timber may be had for the cutting and fetching.'

Another proof that people did attend their parish churches in those days is evident in Wren's statement that the churches 'must be large but still, in our reformed religion, it should seem vain to make a parish church larger than that all who are present can both hear and see.'

That he certainly never did ; there were no screens, as a rule, to cut off the choir from the nave. 'The Romanists,' said Wren, 'may build larger churches, but it is enough if they hear the murmur of the Mass and see the Elevation of the Host ; but ours are to be filled for auditories.'

His pulpits were always brought well forward, his

opinion of preachers being expressed thus : ' A Frenchman is heard further than an English preacher because he raises his voice and sinks not his last words.' That much, I suspect, he learned while in Paris.

Wren hated pews and, still more, some of the practices connected with their use. He says : ' The Church should not be so filled with pews but that the poor may have room enough to stand and sit in the alleys, for to them equally is the Gospel preached. It were to be wished that there were no pews but benches, but there is no stemming the tide of profit and the advantage of the pew-keepers.' So that the system of pew-rents is not new !

An honest soul, Wren. He hated humbug of any sort and was quick to speak his thoughts. Reverence was, with him, an attitude of mind, and it went hard with a workman who was heard using obscene language while engaged under his direction. I give the text of a notice which Wren wrote out and displayed in St. Paul's during its erection :

' Whereas, among labourers, etc., that ungodly custom of swearing is too frequently heard, to the dishonour of God and contempt of Authority ; and to the end, therefore, that such impiety may be utterly banished from these works, intended for the service of God and the honour of religion—it is ordered that customary swearing shall be a sufficient crime to dismiss any labourer that comes to the call, and the Clerk of the Works, upon sufficient proof, shall dismiss them accordingly ; and if any master, working by task, shall not, upon admonition, reform this profanation among his apprentices, servants, and labourers, it shall be construed his fault ; and he shall be liable to be censured by the Commissioners.'

Whether the ' universal adjective ' had suffered contraction from *By-Our-Lady* to the form with which we are so familiar to-day may have been almost a matter of dialect ; it is likely that it varied in different parts of the country. In any case Wren strongly objected to his cathedral being crowned with a ' bloody dome ' ; hence his action in the matter.

There was nothing prudish or stupidly pious about Wren ; he simply would not tolerate what, after all, is a senseless habit, especially in such surroundings. One admires him for his outspokenness ; his views were always definite. When he knew anything to be wrong, or undesirable, he asserted his authority, and there were few enough who dared disobey ; yet, in almost countless instances, he gave way over matters that really affected his ideas and designs—to please others.

His main idea in life was to serve his King and the people. That he earned his living by so doing was a secondary consideration ; it had to be, for no stretch of imagination could cause us to accuse him of extortion in the matter of fees for building his great cathedral ; *four pounds a week* for such work is not excessive.

It will be more convenient here than in any other part of this volume to deal with Wren's connection with Westminster Abbey, of which he was Director of Works during his last years. His work there has since been swept away by later restorers, and therefore is no longer of any practical interest. I had originally thought of omitting any detailed mention of it for this reason, but I have read his report again, and have found it so informative that I have decided to give the greater part of it here, feeling that it will be read with interest for its own sake as an expression of opinion couched in terms so characteristic of Wren himself. The memorial, as it is called, was addressed to the Bishop of Rochester in the year 1713.

It must be understood that the bishopric of Rochester, in those days, was united with the deanery of Westminster. Wren is here addressing his old friend Thomas Sprat, possibly for the last time, as he died on May 20. Sprat's successor was the famous Bishop Francis Atterbury, whose life is well worth reading. The report is as follows :

' When I had the Honour to attend your Lordship to congratulate your Episcopal Dignity, and pay that Respect which particularly concerned myself as employed in the chief Direction of the Works and Repaires of the Collegiate-church of St. Peter in Westminster, you was pleased to give

me this seasonable Admonition, that I should consider my advanced Age; and as I had already made fair Steps in the Reparation of that ancient and ruinous Structure, you thought it very requisite for the Publick Service I should leave a Memorial of what I had done, and what my Thoughts were for carrying on the Works for the future.

‘In order to describe what I have already done, I should first give a State of the Fabrick as I found it, which being a Work of 500 Years or more, through several Ages and Kings’ Reigns, it will come in my Way to consider the modes of Building in those Times; and what Light Records may afford us, such as at present I am able to collect, give me a little to discourse upon. That a Temple of Apollo was here in Thorny Island (the Place anciently so called, where the Church now stands) and ruined by an Earthquake in the Reign of the Emperor Antoninus Pius, I cannot readily agree. The Romans did not use, even in their Colonies, to build so lightly; the Ruins of the ancienter Times shew their Works to this Day; the least Fragment of Cornice, or Capital, would demonstrate their Handy-work.

‘Earthquakes break not Stones to Pieces, nor would the Picts be at that Pains: but I imagine the Monks, finding the Londoners pretending to a Temple of Diana, where St. Paul’s now stands (Horns of Stags, Tusks of Boar, etc., having been dug up there in former Times, and it is said also in later Years) would not be behind-Hand in Antiquity: but I must assert that, having changed all the Foundations of old St. Paul’s, and upon that Occasion rummaged all the Ground thereabouts, and being very desirous to find some Footsteps of such a Temple, I could not discover any, and therefore can no more give Credit to Diana than to Apollo.

‘To pass over the fabulous Account that King Lucius first formed a little Church here, A.D. 170, out of the Ruines of the Temple of Apollo, destroyed by an Earthquake a little before: but it is recorded, with better Authority, that Sebert, King of the East-Saxons, built a Monastery

and Church here in 605, which being destroyed by the Danes was, about 360 Years after, repaired by the pious King Edgar.

‘ This, it is probable, was a strong good Building, after the Mode of that Age, not much altered from the Roman. We have some Examples of this ancient Saxon Manner, which was with Peers or round Pillars, much stronger than Tuscan, round headed Arches and Windows; such was Winchester Cathedral of old, and such at this Day the Royal Chapel in the White-tower of London; the Chapel of St. Crosse; the Chapel of Christ Church in Oxford, formerly an old Monastery; and divers others I need not name, built before the Conquest; and such was the Old Part of St. Paul’s built in King Rufus’s Time.

‘ King Edward the Confessor repaired, if not wholly rebuilt, this Abbey-church of King Edgar, of which a Description was published by Mr. Camden in 1606, from an ancient Manuscript, in these words . . . the Sense of which I translate into Language proper to Builders as I can understand it.

‘ “ The principal Aile or Nave of the Church, being raised high and vaulted with square and uniform Ribs, is turned circular to the East. This, on all Sides, is strongly fortified with double Vaulting of the Ailes in two Stories, with their Pillars and Arches. The Cross-building, fitted to contain the Quire in the Middle, and the better to support the lofty Tower, rose with a plainer and lower Vaulting, which Tower, then spreading with artificial Winding-stairs, was continued with plain Walls to its Timber Roof, which was well covered with Lead.”

‘ These ancient Buildings were without Buttresses, only with thicker Walls; the Windows were very narrow and latticed, for King Alfred is praised for After-invention of Lanterns to keep in the Lamps in Churches. In the Time of King Henry the Third, the Mode began to build Chapels behind the Altar to the Blessed Virgin; what this Chapel here was, is not now to be discovered; I suppose the Foundations of it are under the Steps of King Henry the Seventh’s Chapel, and this Work probably semicircular

(as afterwards four more were added without the Ailes) was also intended for his own Sepulture (some of his own Relations lying now, just below those Steps) and may be supposed to have been within his Chapel: of this he laid the first Stone, Anno 1220, and took down the greatest Part of St. Edward's Church to rebuild it according to the Mode which came into fashion after the Holy War.

' This we now call the Gothick Manner of Architecture (so the Italians called what was not after the Roman Style) tho' the Goths were Destroyers rather than Builders; I think it should with more Reason be called the Saracen Style, for those people wanted neither Arts nor Learning; and after we in the West lost both, we borrowed again from them out of their Arabic Books what they, with great Diligence, had translated from the Greeks.

' They were Zealots in their Religion, and wherever they conquered (which was with amazing Rapidity) erected Mosques and Caravansara's¹ in Haste, which obliged them to fall into another Way of Building, for they built their Mosques round, disliking the Christian Form of a Cross; the old Quarries, whence the ancients took their Blocks of Marble for whole Columns and Architraves, were neglected and, they thought, impertinent.

' Their Carriage was by Camels; therefore their Buildings were fitted for small Stones and Columns of their own Fancy, consisting of many Pieces; and their Arches were pointed without Key-stones, which they thought too heavy. The Reasons were the same in our Northern Climates, abounding in Free-stone, but wanting Marble.

' The Crusado gave us an Idea of this Form, after which King Henry built his Church, but not by a Model well digested first; for, I think, the Chapels without Ailes were an after-thought, the Buttresses between the Chapels remaining useless, if they had been raised together with them; and the King having opened the East End for St. Mary's Chapel, he thought to make more Chapels for Sepulture; which was very acceptable to the Monks, after

¹ Public buildings for the shelter of a caravan and of wayfarers, usually in Asiatic Turkey.

Licence had been obtained from Rome to bury in Churches, a Custom not used before.

'The King's intention was certainly to make up only the Cross to the Westward, for thus it is of a different Manner from the rest more Westward built after his Time, as the Pillars and Spandrils of Arches shew.

'I am apt to think the King did not live to compleat his Intention nor to reach four Inter-columns West of the Tower; the Walls of this part might probably be carried up in his Time, but the Vaulting now covering the Quire tho' it be more adorned and gilded, is without due Care in the Masonry, and is the worst performed of all done before. This Stone was finished 23 Years after his Decease, in the Reign of King Edward the First, so that the old Verse is not punctually right: *Tertius Henricus est templi conditor hujus*.¹

'But alas! it was now like to have been all spoiled; the Abbots would have a Cloyster, but scrupled, I suppose, at moving some venerable Corpses laid between the Outside Buttresses; then comes a bold, but ignorant Architect, who undertakes to build the Cloyster, so that the Buttresses would be without the Cloyster, spanning over it as may be seen in the Section.

'This was a dangerous Attempt. It is by due Consideration of the Statick Principles, and the right Poising of the Weights of the Butments of the Arches, that good Architecture depends, and the Butments ought to have equal Gravity on both Sides. Altho' this was done to flatter the Humour of the Monks, yet the Architect should have considered that new Works carried very high and that, upon a newer Foundation, would shrink: from hence the Walls above the windows are forced out ten Inches, and the Ribs broken. I could not discern this Failure to be so bad till the Scaffold over the Quire was raised to give a closer View of it, and then I was amazed to find it had not quite fallen. This is now amended with all Care, and I dare promise it shall be much stronger and securer than ever the first Builders left it.

¹ Henry III is the founder of this church.

‘ After what had been done by King Henry the Third and his Successor, it is said, the Work was carried further by the Abbots and Monks towards the West, and I perceive also the contiguous Cloyster after the Manner it was begun by King Henry the Third, with Butments spanning over the Cloyster, which they were necessitated to proceed upon, according as it had been begun, tho’ by Error, not to be amended till it was carried beyond the Cloyster ; but then they proceeded with regular Butments answerable to the North-side, till they came to the West-front.

‘ This West-vault was proceeded on with much better Care and Skill, and was a Work of many Years, during the Reigns of the three succeeding Edwards, and King Richard the Second. I suppose there was a great Intermission or Slackness of Work till the Lancastrian Line came in ; for then, in the very first Bay of this Work, I find the Vaulting and the Key-stones, the Rose of Lancaster.

‘ In the tumultuous and bloody Wars between the two Houses of York and Lancaster, little was done to the Abbey, but by the Zeal of the Abbots, who drove on the work as well as they were able, tho’ slowly, to the West-end, which was now completely finished. When King Henry the Eighth dissolved the Monastery, the Cloyster was finished, and other Things for the Convenience of the Abbey.

‘ The Consistory (no contemptible Fabrick) was, I think, done in the Time of King Edward the First, and in order to join it to the Church, the East-side of the Cloyster was taken out of the West-side of the Cross Part of the Church (by ill Advise) for it might have otherwise been done by a more decent Contrivance ; but it may be the King was to be obeyed who founded this octagonal Fabrick : the Abbot lent it to the King for the Use of the House of Commons, upon Condition that the Crown should repair it, which, tho’ it be now used for Records, hath lately been done. The Saracen Mode of Building, seen in the East, soon spread over Europe, and particularly in France, the Fashions of which Nation we affected to imitate in all Ages, even when we were at enmity with it.

‘ Nothing was thought magnificent that was not high beyond measure, with the Flutter of Archbuttresses, so we call the sloping Arches that poise the Vaultings of the Nave. The Romans always concealed their Butments, whereas the Normans thought them ornamental.

‘ These I have observ’d are the first Things that occasion the Ruin of Cathedrals, being so much exposed to the Air and Weather ; the Coping, which cannot defend them, first failing, and if they give way, the Vault must spread. Pinnacles are of no Use, and as little Ornament. The Pride of a very high Roof, raised above Reasonable Pitch is not for Duration, for the Lead is apt to slip ; but we are tied to this indiscreet Form and must be contented with original Faults in the First Design.

‘ But that which is most to be lamented is the unhappy Choice of Materials, the Stone is decayed four Inches deep and falls off perpetually in Scales. I find, after the Conquest, all our Artists were fetched from Normandy ; they loved to work in their own Caen-stone, which is more beautiful than durable. This was found expensive to bring hither, so they thought Rygate-stone in Surrey, the nearest like their own, being a Stone that would saw and work like Wood, but not durable, as is manifest ; and they used this for the Ashlar of the whole Fabrick, which is now disfigur’d in the highest Degree : this Stone takes in Water, which, being frozen, scales off, whereas good Stone gathers a Crust and defends itself, as many of our English Free-stones do.

‘ And although we have also the best Oak Timber in the World, yet these senseless Artificers in Westminster Hall, and other Places, would work their Chestnuts from Normandy ; that Timber is not natural to England, it works finely but decays sooner than Oak. The Roof in the Abbey is Oak but mixed with Chestnut, and wrought after a bad Norman Manner, that does not secure it from stretching and damaging the Walls, and the Water of the Gutters is ill carried off. All this is said, the better, in the next Place, and is wanting still to be carried on, as Time and Money is allowed to make a substantial and durable Repair.

‘ First, in Repair of the Stone-work, what is done shews itself beginning from the East-window ; we have cut out all the ragged Ashlar, and invested it with a better Stone, out of Oxfordshire, from the Quarries about Burford. We have amended and secured the Buttresses in the Cloyster-garden, as to the greatest Part, and we proceed to finish that Side ; the Chapels on the South Side are done ; and most of the Archbuttresses all along as we proceeded. We have not done much to the North-side for these Reasons : the Houses on the North-side are so close, that there is not Room left for the Raising of Scaffolds and Ladders, nor for Passage for bringing Materials : besides, the Tenants take every Inch to the very Walls of the Church to be their Leases ; this Ground, already too narrow, is divided as the Backsides to Houses, with Wash-houses, Chimnies, Privies, Cellars, the Vaults of which, if indiscreetly dug against the Foot of a Buttress, may inevitably ruin the Vaults of the Chapels (and indeed I perceive such Mischief is already done, by the Opening of the Vaults of the octagonal Chapel on that side) and unless effectual Means be taken to prevent all Nusances of this Sort, the Works cannot proceed, and if finished, may soon be destroyed. I need say no more, nor will I presume to dictate, not doubting the proper Means will be taken to preserve this noble Structure from such Nusances, as directly tend to the Demolition of it.

‘ And now, in further Pursuance of your Lordship’s Directions, I shall directly set down what yet remains to finish the necessary Repairs for Ages to come. And then, in the Second Place, (since the first Intentions of the Founders were never brought to a Conclusion) I shall present my Thoughts and Designs, in order to proper compleating of what is left imperfect, hoping we may obtain for this the Continuance of the Parliamentary Assistance.

‘ I have yet said nothing of King Henry the Seventh’s Chapel, a nice embroidered Work and performed with tender Caen-stone, and tho’ lately built in Comparison, is so eaten up by our Weather that it begs for some Compassion which, I hope, the Sovereign Power will take as it is the regal Sepulture.

‘ I begin, as I said, to set down what is necessary for compleating the Repairs, tho’ Part thereof at present I can only guess at because I cannot as yet come at the North-side to make a full Discovery of the Defects there ; but I hope to find it better than the South-side, for it is the Vicissitudes of Heat and Cold, Drought and Moisture, that rot all Materials more than the Extremities that are constant, of any of these Accidents : this is manifest in Timber, which, if always under Ground and wet, never decays ; otherwise Venice and Amsterdam would fall : it is the same in Lead-work, for the North-side of a steep Roof is usually much less decayed than the South ; and the same is commonly seen in Stone Work ; besides, the Buttresses here are more substantial than those of the South-side which I complained before were indiscreetly altered for the sake of the Cloyster, and I find some Emendations have been made about eighty Years since, but not well.

‘ Upon the whole Matter I may say that of the necessary Repairs of the Outward Stone Work, one-third Part is already compleated. The most dangerous Part of the Vaulting over the Quire now in Hand will be finished in a few Months, but the Roof over it cannot be opened till Summer. The Repairs of the Stone Work, with all the Chapels, Archbuttresses, Windows, and Mouldings of the North-side are yet to be done, excepting Part of the North-cross Aile : a great Part of the Expence will be in the North-front and the great Rose-window there, which being very ruinous, was patched up to prevent further Ruin, some Years since, before I was concerned, but must now be new done. I have prepared a Design for it.

‘ The Timber of the Roof of the Nave, and the Cross, is amended and secured with Lead ; and also the Chapels, but the whole Roof and Ailes from the Tower Westward, with Lead and Pipes to be new-cast, remains yet, with all the Timber Work, to be mended, as hath been done Eastward of the Tower already. The Chapels on the North-side must have their Roofs amended, when we can see how to come at them, after the Removal of one little House.

‘ And now, having given a summary Account of what will perfect the meer Repairs, let me add what I wish might be done to render those Parts with proper Aspect, which were left abruptly imperfect by the last Builders, when the Monastery was dissolved by King Henry the Eighth. The West front is very requisite to be finished because the two Towers are not of equal Height and too low for the Bells, which hang so much lower than the Roof that they are not heard so far as they should be : the great West-window is also too feeble and the Gabel-end of the Roof over it is but Weather-boards painted.

‘ The original Intention was plainly to have had a Steeple, the Beginnings of which appear on the Corners of the Cross, but left off before it rose so high as the Ridge of the Roof ; and the Vault of the Quire under it is only Lath and Plaister, now rotten, and must be taken care of.

‘ Lest it should be doubted, whether the four Pillars below be able to bear a Steeple because they seem a little swayed inward, I have considered how they may unquestionably be secured so as to support the greatest Weight that need be laid upon them ; and this after a Manner that will add to their Shape and Beauty.

‘ It is manifest to the Eye, that the four innermost Pillars of the Cross are bended inward considerably, and seem to tend to Ruin, and the Arches of the second Order above are cracked also ; how this has happened and how it is to be secured, I shall demonstrate.’

(Here follows a technical description illustrated by a drawing.) The report concludes :

‘ In my Opinion, the Tower should be continued to at least as much in Height above the Roof as it is in Breadth ; and if a Spire be added to it will give a proper Grace to the whole Fabrick and the West-end of the City, which seems to want it. I have made a Design which will not be very expensive but light, and still in Gothick Form and of a Style with the rest of the Structure, which I would strictly adhere to throughout the whole Intention : to deviate from the Form would be to run into a disagreeable Mixture which no Persons of good Taste could relish. I have varied

a little from the usual Form, in giving twelve Sides to the Spire instead of eight, for Reasons to be discerned upon the Model. . . .

'Something must be done to strengthen the West-window which is crazy, the Pediment is only boarded, but ought undoubtedly to be of Stone. I have given such a Design as I conceive may be suitable for this Part: the Jerusalem-Chamber is built against it and the Access from Tothill Street is not very graceful.

'The principal entrance is from King-street, and I believe always will continue so, but at present there is little Encouragement to begin to make this North-front magnificent in the Manner I have designed while it is so much encumbered with private Tenements, which obscure and smoke the Fabrick, not without danger of firing it.

'The great North-window had been formerly in danger of Ruin but was upheld and stopt up, for the present, with Plaister. It will be most necessary to rebuild this with Portland-stone to answer to the South-rose-window, which was rebuilt about forty years since; the Stair-cases at the Corners must now be new Ashlar'd and Pyramids set upon them conformable to the old-Style, to make the Whole of a Piece.

'I have therefore made a design in order to restore it to its proper shape first intended, but which was indiscreetly tamper'd with some years since by patching on a little Dorick Passage before the great Window, and cropping off the Pyramids, and covering the Stair-cases with very improper Roofs of Timber and Lead, which can never agree with any other part of the Design.'

(According to the note in *Parentalia*, this front, known as Solomon's Porch, was completed by Wren in 1722.)

'For all these new Additions I have prepared perfect Draughts and Models, such as I conceive may agree with the original Scheme of the old Architect without any modern Mixtures to shew my own Inventions, in like Manner as I have among the Parochial Churches of London given some few Examples (where I was obliged to deviate from a

better Style) which appear not ungraceful, but ornamental to the East part of the City ; and it is to be hoped by the publick Care, to the West part also, in good Time, will be as well adorned, and surely by nothing more properly than a lofty Spire, the Western-Towers to Westminster Abbey.'

A fairly fulsome report (I have not given all of it) for an Architect in his eighty-first year ! On his own showing he had failed to do as much as he intended on the North side because he had no room for his scaffolds, but he seems to have clambered over most of the other parts of the Abbey. I do not wish to be irreverent, but I cannot avoid the thought of a cat-burglar !

I have said elsewhere in this volume that I can never believe Wren ever grew old, either physically or mentally, certainly not the latter. The restorations he now proposed were likely to occupy some years ; the thought evidently did not trouble him. He was still Director of Works after he turned ninety years of age, seemingly as 'game' as ever he had been. I observed jokingly to a friend, during the writing of this volume, that the subject of my first biographical work lived to be thirty-one (Schubert) ; I added that it will be some time, with all my love for biography, before I again contemplate writing the life of a man who lived to be over ninety *and worked every moment !*

I have given this report for its historical value, as a story of Westminster Abbey, no less than as an expression of Wren's personal opinion on Renaissance *versus* Gothic building, and his clear reasons for the definite line he took. His great classic learning undoubtedly caused him to go back to first principles in architecture ; to him Gothic—or, as he calls it—Saracen Style—was an interruption in the natural evolution of the art of building. I cannot see eye to eye with him in all he says, nor can I agree with his remarks about pinnacles not being ornamental, though I realize that they serve no great practical purpose.

What I point to is the absolute sincerity of the man. 'Go back to first principles ; build as the Romans built,'

was his honest intention and belief. He hated the sight of exposed flying buttresses, and gave it as his opinion that their use in England, at all events, was fraught with danger owing to our changeable climate. He hated the sight of a lead roof with equal intensity, which has often made me wonder why he allowed that of St. Clement Danes to be visible above the cornice ; perhaps Gibbs was left in charge when he took over the tower from Wren ; I cannot say, but the fact remains that the roof can be seen from the street.

If he went so far as to say that he thought his parish churches in ' a better style,' he said so without conceit or arrogance ; to his way of thinking, the Romans were right and the Goths were wrong, and though we may not be able to agree with his view, we can at least honour him because he was himself honourable.

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CHAPTER XIV
THE SECULAR BUILDINGS

THE SHELDONIAN THEATRE, OXFORD, 1664-9

OXFORD UNIVERSITY owed much to Gilbert Sheldon ; there were few Chancellors who devoted more energy to the welfare of the colleges than the worthy successor to the famous Clarendon. Charles II had certainly every cause to be grateful to him inasmuch as he had been responsible for a large sum of money collected for the King's personal use during those painful years of exile.

Sheldon was eminently fitted to succeed Juxon as Bishop of London and also to be Master of the Savoy ; it was, perhaps, a natural consequence that, three years later, he should be translated to the archbishopric of Canterbury.

It is not likely that Wren and Sheldon came into Contact during Cromwell's time, as the latter had suffered imprisonment. On the other hand, Sheldon was Warden of All Souls (it will be remembered that Wren himself was a Fellow), but it must be pointed out that a condition of release from the Tower was that he did not come within five miles of Oxford. He seems to have kept to his part of the bargain, for he spent most of those unhappy years in Derbyshire.

The strange part about the erection of the Sheldonian Theatre which, as has been already stated, was at the expense of Sheldon himself, was that he never saw it. Wren was six years building the theatre, the formal opening taking place in the summer of 1669. Evelyn writes of it as being 'so magnificently built by the munificence of Dr. Gilbert Sheldon,' and also states that 'it was never seen by the benefactor, My Lord Archbishop having told me that he never did, nor ever would see it.'

This cannot have been disinterest. No man in his right senses would give £16,000 of his own private money for the erection of a suitable place for public ceremonies (the conferring of honorary degrees, and the like) and then refuse to visit it from lack of interest. On the other hand, it does seem strange that he was not present at the opening, if only for Wren's sake.

Sheldon was a man of strange characteristics. His powers of concentration and fervour for work would put most men to shame. The only explanation worth giving for his behaviour on this occasion is that he gave every waking moment to his work and never allowed himself to rest or indulge in relaxation; I can only suggest that he regarded a journey to Oxford as a pleasure-trip, casting all thought of it aside on that account.

Probably he wrote to Wren and explained matters, but there is no record of his having done so. Neither is there any record of his having visited Oxford again, even though he lived until 1677.

The Sheldonian Theatre is one of the group at the end of Broad Street. It still stands much as Wren left it, except that the dome has been enlarged. The exterior is a trifle grim, but the interior is attractive, especially as one recognizes touches, here and there, that were directly the result of Wren's visit to Paris.

The theatre is a thoroughly practical building; it is light and strikes the senses pleasantly. Also it is excellent acoustically. As an early work it may appear immature in some way when compared with his later building, but the advancement in style upon Pembroke Chapel is so distinct that one is inclined to point to it as a landmark in Wren's career.

ADDITIONS AT TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD, 1667-82

In 1665, on the eve of his visit to Paris, Wren received a visit from Dr. Bathurst, Master of Trinity College. Bathurst was desirous of erecting a set of new chambers and outlined his ideas to Wren in definite terms. The

Surveyor suggested a long range of chambers as being most suitable, but Bathurst intimated that he feared the subscribers would expect a quadrangle.

While in Paris, Wren kept in touch with Bathurst. I quote from one of his letters, which seems to have a touch of humour about it.

'I perceive,' he begins, 'the name of a Quadrangle will carry it through with those whom you say may possibly be your benefactors.' Wren never failed at any time to study the requirements of his commissioners. It was his opinion that they who paid the piper were entitled to call the tune; even when the tune did not please him personally, he was courtly in the matter, frequently giving way to others who knew less than himself.

Not, however, without an honest opinion; Wren always spoke, or wrote, his thoughts. So here: 'It will be much the worst Situation for the Chambers and for the Beauty of the College and of the particular Pile of the Building.'

'If I had the skill in Enchantment,' he continues, 'to represent the Pile, first in one view, then in another, that the Difference might be evidently seen, I should certainly make them of my Opinion.' How many times in his life Christopher Wren might have said that!

In this instance he even thought of consulting other opinion, knowing that in a few days he would be in company with the great architects of Paris. He would 'appeal to Monsieur Mansard, or Signor Bernini, both which I shall see at Paris within this Fortnight.'

He wound up his letter by saying that if they paid for a quadrangle it was useless to offer them anything else. 'Let them have a Quadrangle,' said he, 'though a lame one, somewhat like a three-legged table.' This last remark referred to the fact that the quadrangle would be open on the fourth side.

There is now not much work that is recognizable as Wren's at Trinity; extensive rebuilding, undertaken in the nineteenth century, has considerably altered the aspect. Whether the design for Trinity Chapel, built by Wren some

twenty years later, is really his, remains a matter of dispute. There is no authority for saying that it is exclusively his ; it is more likely to have been Bathurst's own work.

A letter written by Wren from his home in Scotland Yard on the second day of March, 1693, is worth quoting here, if only as a further specimen of his charming way of expressing himself. It is addressed to Bathurst, and its subject is that of the proposed designs for Trinity Chapel.

' I am extremely glad to hear of your good Health and, what is more, that you are vigorous and active and employed in Building. I consider the Design you sent me of your Chapel which in the main is very well, and I believe your Work is far too advanced to admit of any Advice ; however I have sent my thoughts which will be of use to the Mason to form his Mouldings.

' He will find two sorts of Cornice ; he may use either. I did not well comprehend how the Tower would have good Bearing upon that side where the Stairs rise. I have ventured upon a change of the Stair, to leave the wall next the Porch of sufficient Scantling to bear that part which rises above the Roofs adjoining. There is no necessity for Pinnacles, and those expressed in the printed Design are much too slender. I have given another way to the Rail and Baluster which will admit of a Vase that will stand properly upon the Pilaster.

' Sir, I wish you Success and Health and long Life with all the Affection that is due from your obliged, Faithful Friend and Humble Servant,

' CHRISTOPHER WREN.'

One is again mildly amused at the remark about the pinnacles. Wren evidently regarded them as ' Nusances.' The letter, as a whole, is thoroughly characteristic.

TEMPLE BAR, FLEET STREET, 1670-2

The original ' bar ' was in reality a chain stretched across the western extremity of Fleet Street, the first mention of which dates back to 1301. There were many such in

London, but this one became a stone gateway in 1533. After the Fire, Wren was called upon to erect his first public monument, to be 'a dignified Structure, worthy to define the exact Spot where a Royal Visitor might be welcomed within the City Gates.'

The ceremony was surely picturesque. The Mayor waited at Temple Bar until the arrival of his Sovereign when, in the name of all loyal persons, he presented His Majesty with the sword of the City. This was immediately returned to him by the King who was then formally welcomed 'within the City gates.' One can imagine Wren, Evelyn, Pepys, and the obese Lord Brouncker, watching the ceremony on some occasion of the visit of King Charles together with the gorgeous effect of the Stuart dresses.

The ritual at Temple Bar is but one specimen of the simplicity that has often marked the reception of a dignitary for some special purpose. Bishops still knock at the doors of the cathedrals in which they are about to be enthroned ; it seems elementary, this idea of craving for permission to enter where one knows quite well one *may* enter, but the very simplicity of the procedure is its undoubted charm. Just as a cathedral door is closed against a Bishop before his enthronement so was Temple Bar closed against the King of England until the little ceremony had been completed.

Wren must have cast about him for an idea for Temple Bar because there was nothing in the way of tradition that he could carry on ; at least, none of the City gates standing at the time resemble his archway over Fleet Street. Also he must have viewed the narrow street with some amount of misgiving ; it offered none too much scope for the imposing structure he was expected to compose.

Peake's translation of an architectural work of Serlio was often a source of inspiration to Wren ; in this he would have found many ideas for arches, triumphal or utilitarian, but I doubt if any of them would have offered much in the way of practical assistance in the erection of an arch that had a comparatively narrow road for its span and a still narrower footway on either side for pedestrians. Not one inch of the roadway could be absorbed as part of the

ground-plan of the arch ; thus he was tied down in everything, with the possible exception of height. Even the height, one supposes, would have to be considered as a matter of proportion.

Wren certainly made the best of what was given him, and Temple Bar presented an amazingly dignified appearance considering its surroundings. Above the arch he built a guard-chamber, on either side of which he fashioned niches suitable to harbour statues of considerable size. Those facing the Strand were for figures of Charles I and Charles II ; those facing Fleet Street for James I and a lady whose identity seems a trifle uncertain. Some say she is Elizabeth, others declaring her to be Anne of Denmark. As she does not appear to me to resemble either very closely in the matter of featural expression, I do not care to offer any solution to the problem.

Further ornamentation subsequently took the form of impaling heads of traitors on spikes ; this unpleasing form of decoration was, happily, discontinued in 1722.

Temple Bar stood until 1879 when it was taken down ; in 1888 it was re-erected at the entrance to Theobald's Park, about a mile west of Waltham Cross. The old site in Fleet Street is now marked by an erection that goes by the name of Temple Bar Memorial.

THE MONUMENT, 1671-7

Some time after the Fire it was suggested (by whom is not known, but possibly the King himself) that ' the late Dreadfull Conflagration ' should be commemorated for all time. There seems to have arisen a discussion as to where this memorial should be placed. Evelyn told Wren he thought it ought to go where the Fire stopped, but the King's opinion was definitely that it should be where it began, probably suggesting that, whereas the Fire commenced in a building whose site was known, it finished more or less over a broad area. Thus, Fish Street Hill was chosen, and the Monument set up about a hundred feet from the actual starting-place of the Fire.

Wren soon executed a design for it. He thought of Ancient Rome immediately, and evolved a plain column in the Doric style from which brazen 'flames' burst forth at regular intervals. These served their symbolic purpose and also that of secreting narrow windows designed to light the staircase within.

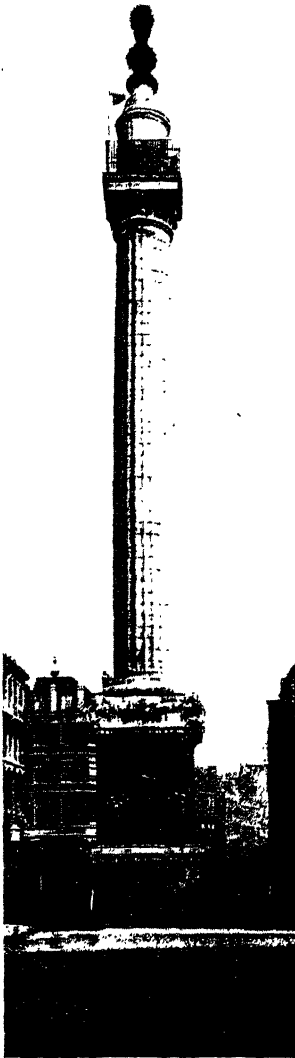
Whether it is true that he had ideas of using the Monument for the purposes of astronomical observation has been suggested by more than one historian; it is doubtful if it could have been so as almost any traffic, however light, would cause sufficient vibration to be detrimental to the use of delicate instruments.

In any case, the design was refused, and Wren was asked to submit another. This time he fluted his column, narrowed the windows, and began on a fresh design for the top. He suggested the alternatives of a colossal statue of King Charles and that of a symbolic figure of London City. It is a pity this latter idea did not materialize; the brass urn which eventually crowned the column is not his, and a poor thing at the best.

The finely sculptured relief was executed by Cibber; Pierce undertook the sculpture of the four dragons at the base, and the rather formal and none-too-brilliant Latin inscriptions were composed by Thomas Gale. The Monument is 202 feet high, the urn measuring 42 feet, and the column contains a spiral stairway. The cost is said to have been about fourteen thousand pounds.

TWO LIBRARIES: TRINITY, CAMBRIDGE, 1673-9;
HONYWOOD, LINCOLN, 1674

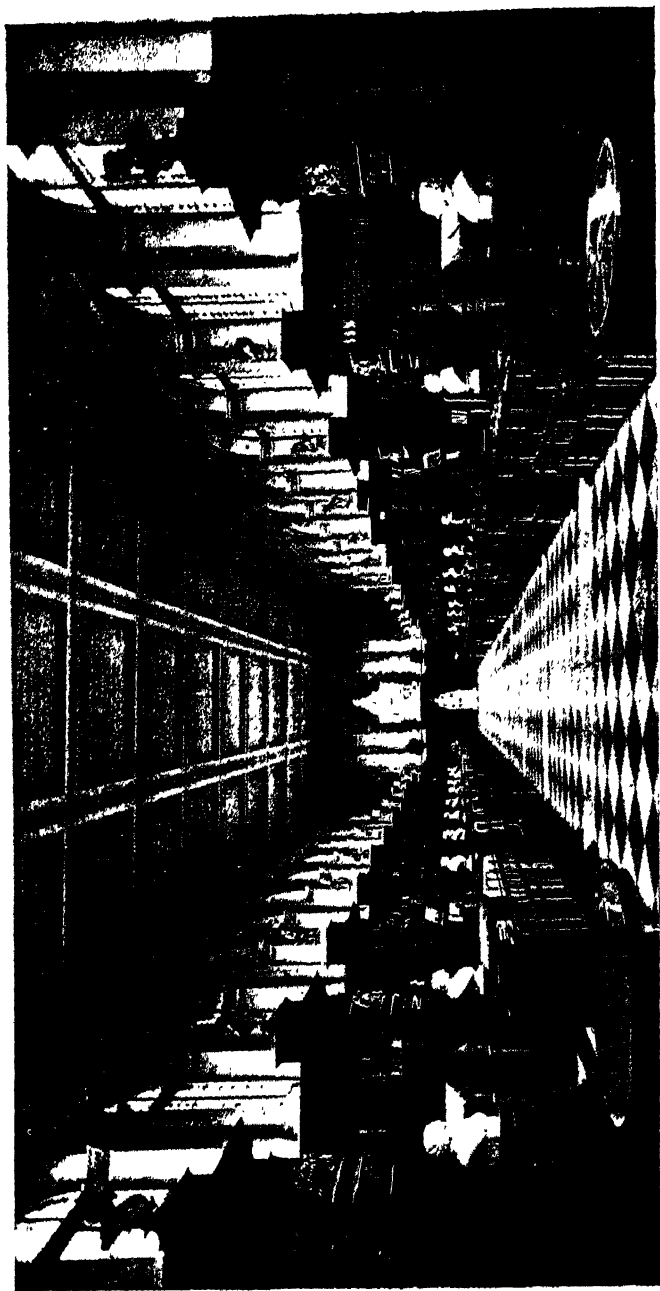
The Master of Trinity, Cambridge, was another of the type of Archbishop Sheldon. He was an indefatigable worker. Dr. Isaac Barrow was a mathematician worthy to be compared with Newton; he established his reputation with a remarkable treatise on Euclid. It will be remembered that he was one of the little band of thinkers in the early days of the Royal Society of which he was elected a Fellow in 1663.



THE MONUMENT
ON FISH STREET HILL
(1671-1677)
(See p. 211)



THE TOM TOWER
CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD
(1681-1682)
(See p. 226)



LIBRARY AT TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE
(1673-1679)

A year previously he had been appointed to the Geometrical at Gresham ; that was Wilkins's doing. In the same year he was appointed first Mathematical Professor at Cambridge ; later he became Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University.

Barrow greatly admired the Sheldonian Theatre and, furthermore, appreciated the fact that its erection had done away with the annual speeches in St. Mary's Church. His point was that Oxford had given Cambridge a lead in the matter of reverence and that Sheldon had set an example which he desired to see followed. Had he been a man of means, it is quite likely that he would have erected a ' Barrovian ' Theatre ; as he was not, he appealed to the heads of the other colleges.

He lost the appeal at a meeting called to discuss the matter, and went back to Trinity full of wrath. He had been told that if he wanted to build, he could build at Trinity. His mental retort was that he *would* build, and that the result would be something to surprise the rest of Cambridge. His thoughts naturally went out to the library at Trinity inasmuch as it had been badly injured by fire some seven years previously.

He called together his servants whom he somewhat surprised by ordering them to accompany him to a site in a meadow about half-way between the western boundary of Neville's Court and the river Cam, where he proceeded (with their help) to stake out the ground for the new library.

His next activity was to examine the financial resources of the college. Here he was met with disappointment : he could not justify the expenditure. He thereupon sat down and wrote a number of letters, so powerful in their expression that he obtained all the money he required.

He then met Wren, with whom he was on very cordial terms, and discussed the whole project. Wren must have been moved by his eloquence and probably amused at his opinion of the heads of the other colleges ; at any rate the Architect begged to be allowed, as his contribution to the scheme, to supply designs free of all charge. Many were

executed, as Wren never minded what trouble he went to in order to bring about a satisfactory result; some of these particular drawings are preserved at All Souls, Oxford.

The exterior of Trinity Library is not in Wren's most decorative style; the vastness of its conception alone makes it agreeable to the eye. His great order of columns are not monotonous, as one enters the quadrangle, for the simple reason that their very symmetry plays pleasant tricks in perspective, but any close examination of detail results in a little disappointment.

This applies only to the exterior for, inside, Trinity Library is magnificent. The complete sense of proportion, the perfect fenestration that causes light to fall all around the reader, the artistry of the arrangement of the book-cases, which project at right angles from the walls on both sides as he walks down the handsome flagged floor, at first almost cause him to lose his sense of judgment. It is only when the reader becomes familiar with the sumptuous surroundings and dares to 'disappear' into this or that recess between the handsome, imposing bookcases, and settles down to an hour's reading, that he allows the beauties of Grinling Gibbons's carving to mingle with the sculptured busts that appear every few feet, and thus absorbs the air of scholarly refinement that pervades the whole building.

Dean Honywood, of Lincoln, on his appointment at the Restoration, found the cathedral had suffered greatly at the hands of the Cromwellians. It took him many years to raise sufficient money for the cathedral; moreover, until he had accomplished this he felt he was not justified in building a new library in which to house the astonishing number of rare books he had collected at Utrecht, and other places, when living more or less in exile after having been deprived of his living at Keyworth in Leicestershire.

The Dean, in asking Wren to build the library, probably did not expect him to favour true Gothic methods, even though Gothic building would surround whatever he chose

to erect. He cannot, however, have been dissatisfied with the careful manner in which Wren effected a sort of transition building.

Wren built his library over a cloister of Roman-Doric pillars, lighting his south wall in such a manner as to admit sun and air. The stone of the wall is of a yellowish hue, and was procured locally ; it makes a pleasant contrast with the Portland Stone which he used for the pillars and window-frames.

The interior of Honywood Library has nothing of the atmosphere of learning and refinement which characterizes that at Trinity, but there is an element of quiet and peace that is certainly conducive to study.

THREE HOSPITALS : KILMAINHAM, 1680-86 ; CHELSEA,
1682-92 ; GREENWICH, 1696-1705

The Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, was the result of a suggestion made by Lord Granard, Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, to Lord Essex. The King, on being approached, readily gave his consent, and a decree by Royal Mandate was issued levying a tax of sixpence in the pound on all Army pay in Ireland, the money to go to the fund for the erection of the hospital.

The building possesses an imposing quadrangle and is built of brick, but it is one of Wren's severest erections. There is a tower, which may or may not be his, a pleasant cloister running round the three sides of the inner court.

The great hall and the chapel—in fact, the interior generally—have little to offer that is of interest when there is so much to see of Wren's work that is more elaborate in character.

Sir Stephen Fox, the founder of Chelsea Hospital, was one of those few men who, in Wren's time, contrived to grow rich in public service without being suspected of corruption of some kind, a distinction as rare as commendable. He was with the King all through his exile, serving Charles with the utmost skill in the management of his

household affairs. Naturally, at the Restoration, he was rewarded; it was ever the King's way to remember those who had served him well.

Fox, so it transpired, made an excellent Paymaster-General to the Forces. He was M.P. for Salisbury, and if his statesmanship was not of the highest order he was a servant of the Crown who could be thoroughly trusted.

Both Wren and Evelyn admired Fox's personality; they found him a charming companion even though, perhaps, not a scholar of their own equal; in personal appearance he was singularly handsome. Evelyn, who rarely said anything unpleasant about anybody, considered that the lucrative post of Paymaster-General could have been given to none worthier than Sir Stephen Fox. The fact that the post had been the means whereby he had accumulated a fortune of £200,000 in a period of twenty years appeared to John Evelyn to be quite in order. 'It was honestly got and unenvied, which is almost a miracle,' he wrote in his diary. 'But,' he added, 'he was as humble and ready to do a Courtesie as ever he was.' That seems to me to be a very high compliment indeed.

It was Evelyn who was partly responsible for persuading Sir Stephen to consider a scheme for erecting a hospital at Chelsea. Evelyn began by suggesting, over dinner one evening, that Fox should purchase Chelsea College and have it adapted as an infirmary for soldiers. Shortly afterwards, Evelyn again dined with Fox and the scheme was gone into once more. It seems that the King, in the meantime, had told Fox that he would settle £5000 a year on such an institution, and build to the value of £20,000. In the end Chelsea Hospital cost £150,000, Wren's remuneration being, for once, a handsome one; he was paid £1000.

Evelyn seemed full of ideas; one was that a good library should be added. He 'mentioned several Bookes, since Some Souldiers might possibly be studious.' Evidently the plans were pushed forward, for the King laid the foundation-stone of the hospital three weeks later (February 16, 1682). Wren was officially appointed architect the following year.

Those are, so far as I can trace, the actual facts regarding Chelsea Hospital. At the same time there was a story, well credited at the time, that named Nell Gwynn as the founder. While the story itself is a fable, there may possibly be truth in the supposition that Nell Gwynn's attitude in the matter caused Charles to be sympathetic when Fox and Evelyn actually made the suggestion.

The story is that the Court knew of the plight and pitiable condition of many of the soldiers who had been at Tangier, one of the courtiers hinting to the King, in the presence of his favourite, that it might be creditable to the English Court and country generally if some accommodation were afforded them. It is likely that the matter was discussed for a few minutes only, and in a light manner, but that the term 'hospital' was mentioned.

The King, ever moved by the thought of his soldiers, named a piece of land that seems to have belonged to the Royal Society. At all events, he offered it then and there. Hardly had he spoken when he remembered, not that it was the Society's property, but that he had already assigned it in another direction.

'Now I think on't,' he said, apologetically, 'I have already given that land to Nell here.' Nell Gwynn's reply is said to have been: 'Have you, Charles? Then I will return it to you for this purpose.' The story will not bear too much examination, but there may be a modicum of fact in it; Nell Gwynn may have said something that can be construed as having sown the seeds of the King's subsequent interest in the scheme.

Wren so built the hospital that convalescent patients would benefit from a maximum of sun, and yet be sheltered from northerly winds. The staircases within, as many writers have remarked, are not only well lighted but have wide treads and broad handrails. Wren was always particular about the measurements of any steps he built; here he seems to have taken the greatest care that infirm patients should not run risks.

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Greenwich Hospital, since 1873 the Royal Naval College, was largely Wren's work and was erected upon a site historical even in his day.

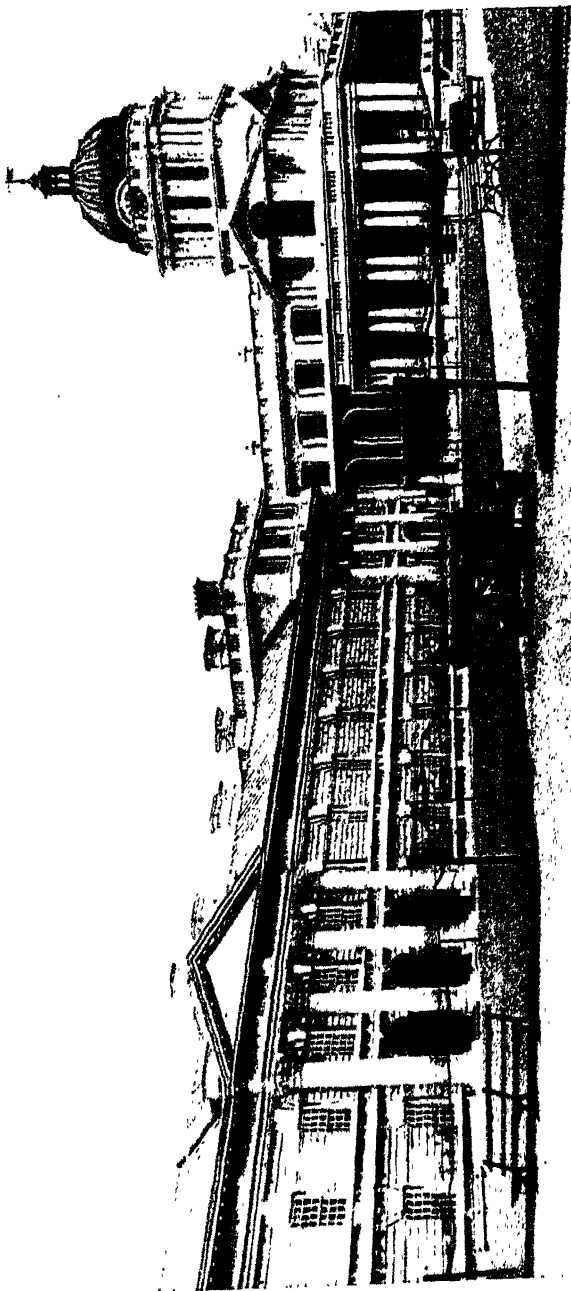
A favourite royal residence of English kings had stood there since 1300. Henry V, in a generous mood, made it over to Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter, who in turn gave it to Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. Humphrey, no doubt, enchanted with the beautiful surroundings Greenwich then had to offer, rebuilt and generally improved the property, which he called *Placentia*. After his death the residence reverted to the Crown.

From this time (1447) it seems to have been favoured as an additional home for English royalty. One king and two queens were born there—Henry VIII, Mary, and Elizabeth; Edward VI died there. Three kings added to it—Edward IV, Henry VIII, and James I. Charles I asked Inigo Jones to build on the site a royal palace worthy of his queen. The Civil War (and his own death) prevented the scheme from being carried to completion, but Jones was able to finish what was called 'Queen's House.'

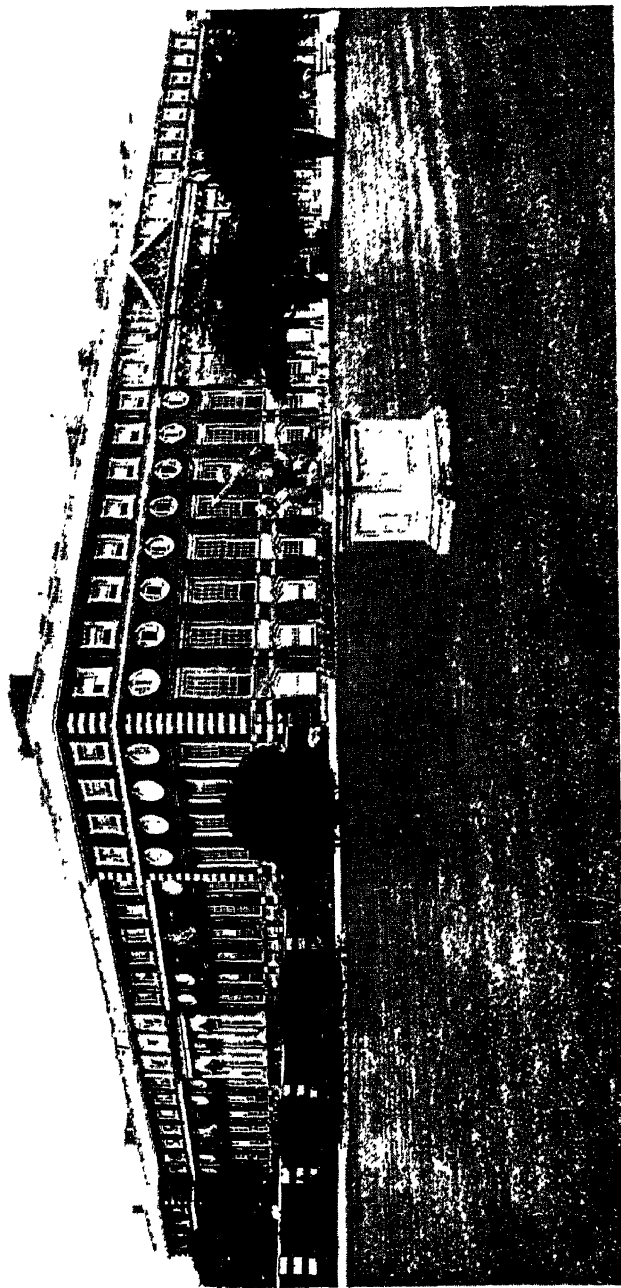
After the Restoration, Charles II pulled down the other parts of the building, and the west wing of the present hospital was erected merely as part of a very extensive scheme not completed in Charles's time. James II, naturally, could not be expected to do anything, but when William and Mary came to the throne the matter was again brought under review.

Hawksmoor, in a report, dated 1778 and written by order of Parliament, made the definite statement that 'Her Majesty Queen Mary, the foundress of the Marine Hospital, enjoined Sir Christopher Wren to build the Fabrick with great magnificence.' The Queen was very definite in her views. Hawksmoor writes: 'Her Majesty's absolute determination to preserve the wing built by her uncle, King Charles II, the Queen's House and the approach of it . . . naturally drew on the disposition of the buildings, as they are now placed and situated.'

Wren himself had suggested the demolition of the Queen's House, but Mary would not hear of it. Thus, in



ONCE A ROYAL RESIDENCE ; NOW THE ROYAL NAVAL COLLEGE :
GREENWICH HOSPITAL
(1696-1705)



PART OF WREN'S WORK AT HAMPTON COURT PALACE
(1689-1694)

his work at Greenwich Hospital, Wren had to conform to the design of what was already standing. The building, as he left it, consisted of four blocks. Behind the long terrace, measuring 680 feet, are the buildings erected in the time of Charles II (Inigo Jones's design); Wren designed the buildings or quarters generally known as those of Queen Anne, Queen Mary, and King William.

The whole structure, with its twin domes, is very impressive when viewed from the river, and one has the feeling, on closer examination, that Wren had an amazing genius for finishing something somebody else has started without making the fact obvious to every observer. Where Wren has done patchwork one has to ask which part he has touched, for it is impossible to guess; that which he has rebuilt may often be mistaken for his predecessor's work.

The King William range contains the famous Painted Hall, where the body of Nelson lay in 1806 in state before his burial in St. Paul's; the surroundings were indeed fitting and dignified, with Thornhill's emblematic paintings that cover the fine ceiling, and pictures of famous naval men and their equally famous doings.

The Royal Naval Museum is in the Queen Anne range; it contains many interesting models, also relics of Nelson, whose bust, by Chantrey, is in the upper quadrangle.

WORK AT TWO PALACES: HAMPTON COURT, 1689-94, AND KENSINGTON, 1690-1706

Hampton Court Palace dates from 1515. It was perhaps one of Wolsey's wisest moves to make a present of it to Henry VIII in 1526, for despite the fact that he had more than once written *Ego et meus Rex* (often quoted as an indication of his arrogant pride) Wolsey knew when to stop. As a matter of fact, the quotation of a sentence of that description proves nothing. Wolsey, writing in English, would probably have written 'my King and I,' but to write *Rex meus et Ego* would merely be writing bad Latin.

Wolsey was one of the most outstanding characters in English history, and his palace at Hampton Court certainly did him justice in the architectural sense. From 1526 it remained a royal residence until the time of George III ; now it is chiefly occupied by royal pensioners.

Edward VI was born, and Jane Seymour died at Hampton ; Henry VIII was there married to Catherine Parr, and Philip to Mary ; Charles I and Queen Henrietta spent their honeymoon within its walls.

William III loved Hampton, and decided within a month of his accession to make it his chief residence. Perhaps the general character of the flat country around reminded him of his native Holland, which he always regretted leaving ; perhaps it was that he loathed Whitehall where, he said, he could not tolerate eating his dinner at a table that was so easily seen from outside. William hated ostentation and publicity above all things.

Wren had now been a member of Parliament for five years, having stood for the Devonian constituency of Plympton in 1685. Looking back on his early training, and knowing his Royalist tendencies, it is impossible not to fall to wondering what he really thought of James II. I cannot imagine a man of Wren's character regarding King James with any feelings other than those of the supremest contempt. On the other hand, when it came to a matter of a vote in the House, for or against the King, in 1688, which way did Wren cast his own vote ?

It is distinctly annoying that *Parentalia* gives no clue, because a clear statement would have given us an inkling of Wren's thoughts on such matters. He must have heard the debate in the House when the Whigs carried two important votes—namely, that James, by leaving the country, had practically abdicated, and that no Catholic should ever again occupy the throne of England.

Wren was no Whig ; of that we may be certain whatever else we may be doubtful upon. Did he, with the other Tories, vote for the divine-right-of-kings-policy, or did he conclude that the last Stuart was so far removed from divinity as to be insufferable ? It may have been that he

voted in favour of the wheezy Prince of Orange whose wife was James's own daughter, hoping that Mary II would not be quite such a fool as her father had been.

At all events, we find Wren in close contact with both King William and Queen Mary at Hampton Court before very long. William declared that his asthma troubled him less there than anywhere, but also intimated that Wolsey had not studied comfort sufficiently, and that he (William) now contemplated the complete destruction of the palace. Whether Mary interfered and suggested that historic sentiment did at least count for something, is not very clear, so far as my reading goes; that the King asked Wren for designs on a large scale is a fact.

In order to lay out the wonderful Fountain Garden on the east side of the palace, quite a hundred yards of the canal at the west end must have been filled up; when William first went to Hampton the canal came close up to the windows.

William insisted on destroying what was known as Cloister Green Court; Wren then constructed what is now called Fountain Court. His work at Hampton comprised the colonnade on the south side of the Clock Court, both the staircases (known as the King's and Queen's respectively), all four sides of Fountain Court itself, the east front which faces the Fountain Garden and, lastly, the south front (which is much shorter) overlooking the terrace and the Privy Garden.

Wren's design was more of a country gentleman's house than that of a palace, but it suited William who would have much preferred to live the life of a recluse than that of a man of public affairs. There is a certain monotony in what Wren did, due to the fact that William wanted so much of it. On the other hand, the south front, particularly, is sufficiently broken to be pleasing in effect; in the full blaze of sunlight it presents a happy exterior.

Gibbons naturally helped Wren considerably, especially in decorating the old Tudor Water Gallery prepared for the Queen as a temporary habitation until her own apartments were ready for occupation. Tijou was asked to work on

banisters, balconies, and grilles; Cibber carved the pediment of the east front.

In 1694 Queen Mary died of smallpox, and William seemed to take no more interest in Hampton Court. Work may not have entirely ceased there, but Wren seems not to have felt inclined to approach the King on technical details, for it seems that William's grief was very sincere. Wren therefore occupied himself at St. Paul's and at various London churches for four years. In 1698, however, the old Palace of Whitehall was practically destroyed by fire; Wren, by this time immersed in the early work at Greenwich Hospital, was then asked by the King to expedite the work at Hampton. On April 28, 1699, the Surveyor submitted his plans for the completion of the work and met the King on May 15; as a result of the interview he was told to proceed.

It is really amazing how he managed to look after the erection of so many buildings at once. In these days, when steel-girder work sends everything up in a very short space of time, Wren's activities would have the appearance of being normal, but when it is remembered that speed in his day was relatively slow it is quite amusing to pay an imaginary visit to the various scenes of work.

Hampton Court Palace occupied him, on and off, from 1689 to 1694. Let us pay this imaginary visit to the other scenes. St. Paul's, one imagines, was progressing as well as could be expected, but it was by no means ready for its first service. It is quite likely, however, that the roof was on the choir, nave, and transepts, and that preparations were being made for the dome. Elsewhere in London there would be activities in progress at the church of St. Edmund, King and Martyr, in Lombard Street; the library for Archbishop Tennyson on the site of the National Gallery; the College of Physicians in Warwick Lane (destroyed in 1866); St. Margaret's, Lothbury; the Mint in the Tower (now destroyed); St. Andrew's-by-the-Wardrobe; All Hallows, Lombard Street; St. Michael Royal, College Hill, would have been begun; also a road from Hyde Park Corner to Kensington. Appelby School, in Leicester-

shire, and the Chapel of Trinity, Oxford, would naturally claim some attention from their architect who had also begun work at Kensington Palace.

So that Wren had not been wasting his time. He was so conscientious in all his undertakings that it is reasonable to suppose he put in an appearance regularly at each and all these scenes of activity. Such time as he could snatch at his own home would be probably devoted to designing Morden College, at Blackheath; the tower of St. Mary's, Warwick; the church of St. Vedast, Foster Lane, and that of St. Mary Somerset, Thames Street. It is quite likely that some of these designs, at any rate, were occupying his attention because all the buildings belong to the year 1695, that is to say, the year following the completion of his work at Hampton Court.

For once in a way, there was a little difficulty over the building at Hampton. It appears that William Talman, Comptroller of Works, reported that some of the stonework erected was unsound. Talman was himself an architect and was probably jealous of Wren. At all events, his action now brought about an inquiry, and he and Wren went before the Lords of the Treasury.

Talman stated that the 'twenty-four piers next the Garden,' by which it has been thought he meant the blocks of masonry between the windows of the south front, were 'all cracked.' Talman said the cracks were wide enough for a man 'to put his fingers in.' Wren's witnesses contradicted the statement, saying that although there were cracks in four of them they were but the breadth of a hair.

'The peers are all crackt,' wrote Talman, in his report, by which, I trust, he did not mean any reflection on their Lordships. Moreover, they were 'cramp't with iron to keep them together.' Wren's reply shows that he was alive to the situation. 'What was done for greater caution ought not to be maliciously interpreted,' was all he said.

The Lords of the Treasury eventually decided to call in an independent opinion, with the result that Wren's statement was corroborated, but Talman never entirely

forgave Wren though there was no further trouble at the time.

King William, however, was quite satisfied which, I imagine, was the chief point. At all events, when he found that the residence at Hampton, though very pleasurable to him, was a little unsatisfactory for the purposes of state affairs, he bought Lord Nottingham's house in Kensington and commanded Wren to prepare it for his and the Queen's occupation.

Evelyn's diary for February 25, 1690, records that he 'went to Kensington, which King William had bought of Lord Nottingham and altered, but was yet a patched building.'

Wren was restricted in the matter of expense. These royal palaces were a large item; the King had paid Lord Nottingham eighteen thousand guineas for the house. Wren therefore sacrificed the exterior considerably in order to be a little more lavish in the matter of decorations for the State apartments.

The King's Gallery and the grand staircase in Wren's wing are perhaps the finest of the interior arrangements. Queen Mary's gallery and Queen Anne's drawing-room are good specimens of Wren's domestic designing, but the work done by William Kent, after the accession of George I, is not good, either inside or out.

Kensington Palace is such in name only; the part of real interest to a Wren student is the Orangery, built for Queen Anne in 1704, at a cost of £2600.

Both William and Mary died at Kensington; Anne also. Queen Victoria was born there and learned the tidings of her accession to the throne of England. It was by her order, at the close of her reign, that Kensington Palace was thrown open to the public.

GREENWICH OBSERVATORY, 1675

The fact that Wren built the Observatory at Greenwich does not now signify greatly; the addition of the present building has naturally superseded his original work from

the point of view of astronomical utility. Nevertheless, the story of how an Observatory came to be built there at all is part of Wren's historical life, and is interesting on that account.

The idea, in a sense, was engendered in the mind of one of King Charles's favourites, the Duchess of Portsmouth, who introduced a French astronomer to the King. It appears that this astronomer claimed to have discovered a method of determining longitude by measuring the distance of the moon from certain planets and fixed stars. The King, ever interested in anything calculated to aid navigation, at once appointed a Commission of Inquiry of which a young English astronomer, named John Flamsteed, was a member.

The Frenchman's theories were exploded by Flamsteed, who pointed out that very little was known about the planets and stars mentioned. Flamsteed ultimately became famous, and deservedly so, for he furnished both Newton and Horrocks with much valuable data. The point here about him is that he was well known to the Royal Society and friendly with Wren.

The King decided that the north-east turret of the White Tower (in the Tower of London) was not satisfactory for the purposes of observation of the firmament, and a further committee was appointed to select a site for a suitable Observatory. Wren, being not only King's Surveyor, but an astronomer as well, was naturally asked to give his advice.

Several sites were discussed, one of them Hyde Park, another being Chelsea College grounds, then the property of the Royal Society. Wren, however, gave it as his opinion that an Observatory should stand upon high ground and suggested the hill on which stood the ruins of old Greenwich Castle as being best for the purpose.

Flamsteed himself records that 'Greenwich Hill, being mentioned by Sir Christopher Wren, the King approved of it as being the most proper.' Charles himself gave £500 towards the expenses of building, and his permission for the bricks of old fortifications at Tilbury to be utilized.

A gate-house in the Tower furnished some lead and, with what was left of the old Castle, particularly its foundations and what was procured from other sources, Greenwich Observatory was built in the last few months of 1675.

It was a rushed affair and restricted in the matter of cost in every department, but it remained as England's Observatory for two hundred years. The advent of the new building in 1899 has, of course, brought the activities at Greenwich so much up to date as to detract from interest in Wren's work. That, however, is the story of the building of Greenwich Observatory.

Wren did a certain amount of work in the Tower of London, but it has since been destroyed. While his workmen were engaged at the foot of the staircase leading to St. John's Chapel they found a wooden chest containing the bones of two children. These were thought to be those of the two little Princes, Edward V and Richard Duke of York. The King ordered the remains to be interred at Westminster, and a royal warrant, addressed to 'Sir Christopher Wren, Knight, Surveyor-General of His Majesty's Works,' was thus worded :

'To signify His Majesty's Pleasure, that you provide a White Marble Coffin for the supposed Bodies of the two Princes lately found in the Tower of London, and that you cause the same to be interred in Henry the Seventh's Chapel, or such convenient Place as the Dean of Westminster shall appoint : and this shall be your Warrant. Given under my Hand, the 18th day of February 1674-5.

'ARLINGTON.'

THE TOM TOWER, CHRIST CHURCH COLLEGE, OXFORD,
1681-2

The Tom Tower was completed in 1682. It was built by Wren at the request of Dr. John Fell, then Dean of Christ Church. He desired Wren to build a tower that should complete Wolsey's original gateway. It is rather

difficult to say where Wren actually began his work but, judging by the look of the window above the gateway itself, I think those writers who have considered it to be Wren's work are probably right, in which case the additions began only a little way above the actual arch.

Wren's characteristics come out very strongly in this quaint erection. The two little domes, or cupolas, look as though they are his without a doubt ; the dome that crowns the tower is exactly what one would have expected of him.

How he must have hated his pinnacles, though ! ' No sort of Pinnacle is worthy enough to appear in the Air,' he wrote. It was a principle in which he really believed, and one he strove hard to carry out all his architectural life.

The Tom Tower is so named because it contains the great bell ' Tom,' dedicated to St. Thomas of Canterbury. It was recast at the time, after its removal from Osney Abbey. The clock in the tower strikes the hours on it and, at five minutes past nine in the evening, it is rung *ror* times by hand to mark the closing of college gates. The gate, the tower, and also the first quadrangle are named after the bell, Tom Quad being the largest in Oxford.

WINDSOR TOWN HALL, 1688

It will be recalled that, under James II, Wren was member for Plympton St. Maurice in Devonshire. He was returned for New Windsor at the election for the first Parliament of William III, and may have considered it a tactful move to build a town hall for his new constituents. This proved to be an attractive erection, with a sort of arcade (for the purposes of transacting business) on the ground floor and a spacious room above.

When everything was complete the Mayor and Corporation duly inspected it, but objection was raised because the supports for the floor of the room above the arcade were, in their view, insufficient. Wren assured every one concerned that they had nothing to fear. For all we know, he may have told them the story of St. Stephen's, Walbrook,

and have pointed out that its dome was still where he had placed it.

The worthy Mayor, however, took leave to doubt Sir Christopher in this particular instance, and requested that two more columns should be added. Wren objected that such an addition would spoil the effect but, in the end, gave way.

The columns were duly erected, and the authorities expressed themselves quite satisfied. They would hardly have done so had they known that, though invisible from the floor-level, there was *a space between the top of the pillars and the ceiling they were supposed to support!* This was discovered not very long ago. Wren was right, of course; it was a piece of schoolboy mischief. There was always something of Peter Pan in Christopher Wren, and one loves him for it. The man who could design the tower for St. Michael's, Cornhill, when he was just short of ninety years of age, and with such amazing freshness, must surely have possessed some of the spirit of the 'boy who never grew up.'

For the rest, there are several works of Wren that need not be more than tabulated. They are the Storehouse in the Tower, 1664; pedestal of the monument to Charles I, Charing Cross, 1678; King's Bench Walk, Temple, 1678; Middle Temple Gateway, Fleet Street, 1684-8; the Great Schoolroom at Winchester College, 1684; Fawley Court, Oxfordshire, 1684; Appelby School, Leicestershire, 1693; Morden College, Blackheath, 1695.

There are a number of buildings attributed to Wren which do not possess documentary evidence to substantiate their claim. I give them without comment. They are the Bishop's Hostel, Cambridge; Brewers' Hall, London, 1670; Ingestre Parish Church, 1676; the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, 1681-3; Belton Hall, Grantham, 1685-9; Guildhall at Rochester, 1687.

Then, again, there are works that are authentically his but which have either been destroyed or else so rebuilt

as to be unrecognizable from his point of view. The works referred to are some repairs to the Guildhall (destroyed by Dance), 1669-71; the Royal Exchange (burned down in 1838), 1668-9; the Custom House (also destroyed by fire in 1718), 1668; Mercer's Hall, Cheapside (destroyed and the front re-erected at Swanage in 1882), 1670; the Armoury in the Tower of London (destroyed by fire, 1841), 1672; Drury Lane Theatre (taken down in 1791), 1674; a house at Arbury (of which stables only are now standing), 1674; Latin School, Christ's Hospital (destroyed 1825), 1682; Archbishop Tenison's¹ Library (destroyed to build the National Gallery), 1688; College of Physicians (destroyed in 1866), 1688; some work on the front of the north transept in Westminster Abbey (destroyed by restorers), 1698-1722.

At the end of the volume a classified list of Wren's complete works will be found, including a separate tabulation of the parish churches that have been destroyed from one cause or another.

An interesting incident, giving yet another glimpse into life in London during the reign of Charles II, arises out of a commission from the King for Wren to prepare a monument to his martyred father. Unfortunately nothing came of the scheme, to the great disappointment of the Surveyor himself.

Dr. Sprat, Wren's old friend, preached a rousing sermon before the members of the Commons in St. Margaret's, Westminster, on the eighteenth anniversary of the death of Charles I. He congratulated them upon having voted £70,000 for a solemn funeral to the King, to be undertaken with the greatest pomp, as well as the proposed memorial to be built by Sir Christopher Wren.

It was a standing reproach to England, he told them, that this had not been done before. 'But for the future,'

¹ Thomas Tenison (1636-1715). In 1687 he preached a notable funeral sermon on Nell Gwynn whom he eloquently defended, and attended Queen Mary in her last illness. He was once Rector of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, which accounts for his library being on the site of the present National Gallery. As Primate, he crowned both Queen Anne and George I.

he declared, 'an Englishman abroad will be able to mention the name of King Charles I without blushing.' He followed this statement by a powerfully worded eulogy, of which one sentence is neatly turned.

The King was in 'all things most illustrious, in all things to be commended, in all things to be imitated, in some things scarce imitable and only to be admired.'

Finally, there was the Palace of Winchester of which I give two descriptions, both contemporary :

'King Charles, taking a Liking to the Situation of Winchester by reason of the deliciousness of the Country for all manner of Country Sports, set Sir Christopher Wren, that great Architect (who had the Honour of making the Plan of St. Paul's Church in London, laying the first Stone and living to see it finished) to make a Plan for a Royal Palace where the old Castle stood ; and King Charles was so fond of it and forwarded it with so much Diligence that the whole Core of the Palace was roof'd and near finished when that Prince died.

'It will be the finest Palace in England when finished, and inferior to few abroad. It fronts the City to the East by a noble Area between two Wings, the Marble Pillars sent by the Duke of Tuscany for supporting the Portico of the Staircase, lie half-buried in the ground. The Staircase carries you up to the great Guard-hall from whence you enter into sixteen spacious Rooms in each Wing, nine of which make a Suite to the End of each Wing.

'There are also two Entries under the Middle of each Wing to the South and North, above which are to be two Cupolas ; and the Front to the West end extends 326 feet, in the Middle of which is another gate, with a Cupola to be also over it. Under the great Apartment, on each side from the ground, is a Chapel, on the Left for the King and another on the Right for the Queen ; and behind the Chapel are two Courts, finely piazza'd to give Light to the inward Rooms.

'There was to be a Terrass round it as at Windsor and the ground laid out for a Garden, very spacious, with a Park marked out of eight Miles Circumference, and that

Park to open into a Forest of twenty Miles Circumference, without either Hedge or Ditch. The King designed also a Street from the Area to the East, in a direct Line by an Easy Descent, to the great Door of the Cathedral.'

The other quotation runs thus :

' From the Church we walked up the town and went to take a view of the King's House upon the hill. It stands very high in a very fine country and overlooks all Winchester and Saint Cross. The house was being prepared for a hunting seat for the King, being in a free sporting country and not far from the famous New Forest.

' The plan or design was made by Sir Christopher Wren, and I believe is better than he ever executed because in this he was left to himself by the King ; it was just covered in before the King died.' The plan is still in existence.

All that remained of this apparently wonderful palace was used for barracks in the nineteenth century ; the building has now entirely disappeared with the exception of a small portion of a portico. *Sic transit gloria mundi !*

■

CHAPTER XV
WREN'S LAST YEARS

VIRTUALLY it is impossible, at this point, to take up an exact chronology of Wren's life where we left off. We watched him digging the foundations of his cathedral and gave some consideration to the completed building ; we compared and contrasted some of the parish churches and studied the more important of his secular works ; but to attempt a review of his activities, year by year, is to find ourselves undertaking journeys to various parts of the country in addition to inspecting the sites of at least a dozen City churches that no longer exist.

We should have found him busy at St. Michael's, Wood Street, and St. Mildred's, Poultry ; we should have gone with him towards the river to inspect St. Michael's, Queenhithe, or visited Basinghall Street to see St. Michael Bassishaw ; St. Bartholomew-by-the-Exchange would not have engrossed our attention any more than St. Antholin's, Watling Street, near where St. Mary Aldermary now stands. All Hallows-the-Great, Upper Thames Street, St. Mary Magdalen, Knight rider Street, St. Benet, Gracechurch Street, St. Matthew, Friday Street, St. Michael, Crooked Lane, and St. Mary Somerset, Thames Street, would each in turn have expected a visit.

So that the only feasible method of procedure is to regard the period from the hour Thomas Strong, the Master-mason, laid the foundation-stone of St. Paul's in 1675 to that when Christopher Wren, junior, laid the top stone on the lantern in 1710 as one of ceaseless activity in the Surveyor's life.

He was now seventy-eight, but had not yet given up allowing himself to be dragged to the dome of St. Paul's

in a basket, the mechanical contrivance for which, by the way, is still preserved in the cathedral. However, he did prefer to depute the laying of the top stone on the lantern to his son rather than remain at such a giddy height for the ceremony; otherwise he seems to have been as active as ever.

Spectacular as his career had been up to this time, he had suffered astonishingly little from jealous opposition. Few great men have suffered less. He had nothing of that which confronted Handel in London (a few years after Wren's death) when jealous enemies all but beggared him.

There is no record of Wren ever meeting Handel, but I feel quite sure they must have met because Handel frequently played on the organ in St. Paul's when Dr. Maurice Greene was organist of the cathedral. Greene, it is said, often used to blow for him while he played.

Handel arrived in 1710, the year St. Paul's was completed, and if he did not actually meet Wren in the cathedral itself, which I think extremely doubtful, surely Wren must have gone to the Haymarket to hear some of Handel's operas.

It would have been amusing to see them together—Handel huge and blustering (albeit very good company) and Wren courtly and unassuming. Handel's language on occasions was enough to curl one's hair; Wren was never heard to express himself profanely.

Handel's career, though not stormy all through, had its tempestuous periods; Wren's had disappointments, such as the collapse of the scheme for planning a new London, or of completing Winchester Palace, but on the whole it was singularly free from persecution by rivals. The affair at Hampton with Talman did not amount to much, and I doubt if Wren ever thought about it once it was settled, but the time did eventually come when the Surveyor was treated to undeserved indignity.

The trouble began in 1696. Whether it actually sprang from any enemies Wren may have consciously or unconsciously made is by no means certain, but the Surveyor was somewhat taken aback upon being informed that

Parliament considered the building at St. Paul's was not progressing as, in their opinion, it should.

It was a case of pure ignorance, as far as I can see. The staff at the cathedral was the same as it had been throughout, so far as numbers were concerned; at least, I have found no statement to the contrary. I think it is reasonable to suggest that certain parts of the building took longer to construct than the lay mind realized; in suggesting this I am giving the Parliamentarians credit for being sincere in which I may, of course, be quite wrong. It is more likely that a few quidnuncs were at work, not having anything else to occupy what they were pleased to call their attention.

The nett result, so far as Wren was concerned, was an insertion of a clause in the Act referring to St. Paul's that decreed 'the suspension of a moiety of the Surveyor's salary until the said Church should be finished; thereby the better to encourage him to finish the same work with the utmost diligence and expedition.'

So far as is known, Wren was never warned of this; neither was a Parliamentary deputation sent to wait upon him to discuss the progress of the cathedral, nor even to ask how long he considered it would take to complete. It seems that the first intimation he received was a formal notice of Parliament's action.

Such a matter would be none too private. It was an insult, pure and simple. Wren's answer might have been a retort that Parliament was hardly being robbed considering his wage—it is a better term than *salary*—was four pounds a week. He might have pointed out that he gave one-fourth of this to the cathedral fund the first year he accepted it.

Instead of which he swallowed his resentment and bore the insult in silence. He continued, from 1696 to 1710, to build London's cathedral for *two pounds a week*, a similar amount accruing from his work on the parish churches. This latter did not actually come to him in the form of a stipend; it was a percentage charged upon the value of the buildings. That, however, is all it amounted to.

It is not my intention to suggest that Wren was in poor circumstances at this, or at any other stage in his career. Although I have no documentary proof for saying that he had private means, I am of opinion that it was so. The point is that a man of his ability and genius—apart from his absolute integrity—was at least entitled to respect and consideration, and should have been earning a good income.

Had Charles II still been alive I am convinced nothing of the kind would have occurred ; he would not have allowed it. There had been many changes since his time, and Dutch William was far too asthmatic and far too engrossed in keeping himself aloof from any activities he could reasonably avoid to be likely to interfere in any way.

Wren simply waited until the cathedral was finished. He had always endeavoured to complete the work with that ' diligence and expedition ' that Parliament required, and there is no evidence at all that he attempted to rush the building in any shape or form.

When the top stone of the lantern had been laid and the interior was complete he applied for his arrears. The cathedral had been open for service for the last thirteen years, the choir having been more or less finished ; so that Parliament could not now accuse him of unwillingness to meet their desires.

On February 13, 1710, the Surveyor addressed a ' humble Petition to the Queen's most excellent Majesty.' There is no record of Wren's attitude towards Queen Anne or hers towards him, in the personal sense, but there is little doubt that she held him in high esteem. The petition ran as follows :

' The most humble Petition of Sir Christopher Wren Sheweth :

' That there being a Clause in an Act of Parliament which suspends a Moiety of your Petitioner's salary at St. Paul's till the Building be finished, and being obstructed in his Measures for completing the same by the arbitrary Proceedings of some of the Commissioners for that Fabrick ;

‘Your Petitioner most humbly beseeches your Majesty to interpose your Royal Authority so that he may be suffered to finish the said Building in such a manner and offer such designs as shall be approved by your Majesty, or such Persons as your Majesty shall think fit to appoint for that Purpose. And your Petitioner will ever pray, etc.

‘CHRISTOPHER WREN.’

February 13, 1710.

The Queen laid the petition before the Commissioners who waxed indignant immediately. The report is too long to quote here as it stands, but the chief points are not without interest.

First, the Commission denied ever having thought the Surveyor’s salary more than he should have received, which seems to be a good beginning; they denied ever having done anything that the Surveyor could construe as having obstructed his progress, and they laid the full responsibility of the suspension of the moiety of salary on Parliament alone.

In this last matter they were probably right. Had they really been as honest as they made out, they would hardly have thought it necessary to defend their position in the eyes of the Queen by adding a list of complaints against the Surveyor. They did not actually accuse him of embezzlement, but they came very near to so doing in that they suggested that he winked at the corruption of his subordinates.

They dragged up differences of opinion they themselves had had with the Surveyor, particularly that concerning the iron fence at St. Paul’s. Wren wished it to be of wrought-iron, the Commissioners—especially those of the Prat and Chichley type—made the amazing statement that cast-iron was ‘ten times as durable as the other.’

They accused Wren of arbitrary conduct in that he had, without consulting them, raised a ‘poor mean rail, disliked by everybody, on each side of the great ascent of the west end.’

The corruption referred to was chiefly that of Jennings,

the carpenter, who was accused of selling great quantities of material that was actually charged on St. Paul's accounts; the Commissioners estimated—how is not known—that Master Jennings was making fifteen hundred a year out of his 'trade.'

Now that the matter had come to a head, the said Jennings must be prosecuted for these shameful 'frauds and abuses,' a matter that cropped up again later.

The Commissioners wound up their denunciation of Wren by taking him to task for his phrase about 'arbitrary proceedings.' The Commissioners took leave to remind the Surveyor that the Commission was composed of 'two archbishops, several bishops, the Lord Mayor, etc. etc., persons whose known honour, justice, and integrity should have kept Sir Christopher from making any reflection upon them.'

The Dean of St. Paul's was now, of course, not Sancroft. He had been Archbishop of Canterbury—and a very excellent one—since we last heard of him, had been deprived of the primacy, and had now been dead some years (1693). It will be remembered he refused to take the oath of allegiance to William III. The present Dean, if on the Commission, may have been partly responsible for the trouble; from what I have read of Dean Sherlock¹ I gather he held strong opinions and possessed an acid tongue. The Bishop of London was the charming Henry Compton with whom Wren was on very good terms. Compton, incidentally, crowned William and Mary.

The Surveyor, not having obtained satisfaction from his appeal to Queen Anne, now wrote to Bishop Compton and the Archbishop:

'TO HIS GRACE THE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY
AND THE BISHOP OF LONDON.

'May it Please your Lordships,

'That I humbly lay before you the State of the Suspension of a Moiety of my Salary (as Surveyor of St. Paul's

¹ Thomas Sherlock, later Bishop of London (1748), translated from the See of Salisbury to which he was appointed in 1734.

Cathedral) by a Clause in an Act of Parliament, which is thus :

‘ The Design of Parliament in granting the Coal Duty for the said Cathedral at that time being to have the Building completed with all possible Speed, they did, to encourage and oblige the Surveyor’s Diligence in carrying out the Worke, suspend half his Allowance, till all should be done. Whereby I humbly conceive it may justly from thence be implied that they thought the Buildings and everything belonging to it, was wholly under my Management and Direction, and that it was in my Power to hasten or protract it.

‘ How far it has been soe your Lordships know : as also how far I have been limited and restrained. However, it has pleased God so to bless my sincere Endeavours, as that I have brought the Building to a Conclusion, so far as is in my Power, and I think nothing can be said now to remain imperfect, but the Iron Fence round the Church, and painting the Cupola, the directing of which is taken out of my hands, and therefore I hope that I am neither answerable for them, nor that the said suspending Clause can, or ought to, affect me any further on that Account.

‘ As for painting the Cupola, your Lordships know that it has long been under Consideration : that I have had no power left me concerning it, and that it is not resolved in what manner to do it, or whether at all. And as for the Iron Fence, it is so remarkable and fresh in my Memory, by whose Influence and Importunity it was wrested from me, and the doing it carried in a Way that I may venture to say will ever be condemned. I have just this to observe further, that your Lordships had no Hand in it : and consequently ought not to share in the Blame that may attend it.’

Who was to blame for what Wren considered a high-handed action has not been stated, as far as I am aware. If the Dean had *not* some hand in it, I should be surprised, but it seems useless to suggest this definitely without evidence. However, Wren concludes his letter thus :

' This, then, being the Case, and Nothing left that I think can keep the said Clause of Suspension any longer in Force against me,

' I most humbly pray your Lordships to grant your Warrant for paying me what is due to me on that Article, which was £1300 last Michaelmas. And if for the Future my Advice and Assistance be required in anything about the said Cathedral, I will be ready to give the Same, and to leave the Consideration of it to your Lordships: being, with all Submission,

' My Lords,

' Your Lordships most Obedient, and most faithful humble Servant,

' CHRISTOPHER WREN.'

Had not Wren's character forbidden any conceivable doubt as to his integrity, this letter would, in my judgment, have done so. Direct in purport, courteous in expression, it hits the nail on the head; *the money was due*. Not a word, be it noted, of grumbling that the money was suspended; all he presented to their Lordships was the fact that he had done all he was allowed to do, and now claimed his arrears of payment.

The Archbishop sent Wren's letter to the Attorney-General, Lord Northey, a fair-minded official likely to give reasonable consideration to every aspect of the petition. His decision was a legal one. He expressed sincere sympathy with the Surveyor but also stated that, in his opinion, as Parliament had suspended the moiety, and not the Commissioners, only Parliament could set matters right. The Commissioners had no power to pay Wren (in face of an Act of Parliament) until St. Paul's was officially declared finished.

Wren still adhered to his view that it *was* finished, so far as he was concerned. He thereupon penned a shorter but still more pithy letter. This, his third appeal, he directed ' to the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament Assembled ':

‘ The humble Petition of Sir Christopher Wren,
Sheweth,

‘ That in the Act of Parliament of 8 and 9 of the late King William for completing the Building and adorning the Cathedral-church of St. Paul’s, London, there being a Clause for the suspending a Moiety of the Surveyor’s salary till the said Church should be finish’d, thereby the better to encourage him to finish the Same with the utmost Diligence and Expedition, your Petitioner humbly conceives that the Parliament, by putting the Surveyor under such Obligation, did apprehend that the Building and everything belonging to it, was wholly under his Management and Direction, and that it was in his Power to hasten or protract it.

‘ That your Petitioner, having been Surveyor of the said Cathedral Church from the beginning if its Rebuilding and the Same (as may be seen) being now completed, excepting the Iron Fence, some Ornaments undetermined, and other matters which some of the Commissioners for the Fabrick have soe interposed in, as that his measures for completing the Same are wholly overruled and frustrated; and thereby he is under this Hardship as neither to be payed the Salary that is due to him, nor suffer’d to perfect the Worke that is made the Condition of it.

‘ Your Petitioner, therefore, most humbly prays your Honours to grant him such Relief in the Premises as to your great Wisdom and Justice shall seeme meet.’

Wren published a tract in his own defence, two years later, in which he stated that the ‘ Honourable and August Assembly so considered his Case and were so well satisfied with the Justice and Reasonableness of it as to declare the Church to be finished as far as was requir’d to be done and perform’d by him as Surveyor-General. And it was accordingly enacted that the suspended Salary should be paid him on or before the 25th of December 1711.’

The whole affair was a disgraceful exhibition of meanness and high-handed officialdom. Even so, Wren still stood in high favour with the Queen. The following year

a bill was passed 'for building and endowing Fifty new Churches in London and Westminster,' and Wren was appointed on the Commission. Of the fifty specified only ten were ever built, and none of them by Wren himself. For the sake of those who visit London and who are interested in its churches, it might be good to give a list of those that were actually built under this scheme.

Wren's pupil Gibbs, who (it will be remembered) built the tower of St. Clement Danes, was responsible for the charming church of St. Mary-le-Strand, which stands only a few feet away to the west. Hawksmoor built St. Anne's, Limehouse, Christ Church, Spitalfields, St. George's, Bloomsbury, and St. George's-in-the-East; while Dance was the architect for St. George's, Queen Square, and St. Leonard's, Shoreditch. St. John's, Westminster, was built by Archer. The other two churches are St. John's, Horsleydown, and St. Luke's, Old Street.

Wren wrote a long letter to one of his brother Commissioners on the subject of the building of these churches. It is too long to quote here in full, but I cannot refrain from giving excerpts that have caught my eye while reading it.

He has no patience with purchasing cheap sites because they are cheap, his contention being that the churches should be placed in suitable positions. He expresses the sentiment very characteristically thus :

'I conceive that the Churches should be built, not where vacant Ground may be cheapest in the Extremities of the Suburbs, but among the thicker Inhabitants.' The last remark appears to be a reflection on the said 'Inhabitants' but, one supposes, 'thicker' had less meanings then than it has now.

His next paragraph is sound sense. 'I could wish,' he writes, 'that all burials in Churches might be disallowed, which is not only unwholesom, but the Pavements can never be kept even, nor Pews upright : and if the Churchyard be close about the Church, this also is inconvenient, because the Ground being continually raised by the Graves occasions, in Time, a Descent by Steps into the Church

which renders it damp, and the Walls green, as appears evidently in all old Churches.'

His alternatives are equally sensible. He recommends future burials to be 'in Cemeteries seated in the Outskirts of the Town, and since it is become the Fashion (even where the Deceased are of moderate Condition), though the Cemeteries should be half a Mile, or more, distant from the Church.'

He goes on to say that 'the Service may be first perform'd in the Church, but for the Poor, and such as must be interred at the Parish Charge, a publick Hearse of two Wheels and one Horse may be kept at small Expence, the usual Bearers to lead the Horse, and take out the Corpse at the Grave.'

With regard to materials for building, Wren says that 'the Brick-makers spoil the Earth in the mixing and hasty burning till the Bricks will hardly bear the Weight; though the Earth about London, rightly managed, will yield as good Brick as were the Roman Bricks (which I have often found in the old Ruins of the City) and will endure, in our Air, beyond any Stone our Island affords, which, unless the Quarries lie near the Sea, is too dear for general Use.'

His opinion on the relative values of stone is worth quoting. 'The best,' he says, 'is Portland, or Roch-abbey Stone, but these are not without their Faults. The next Material is the Lime; Chalk-lime is the constant practice, which, well mixed with good Sand, is not amiss, though much worse than hard Stone-lime. The Vaulting of St. Paul's is a rendering as hard as Stone; it is composed of Cockle-shell-lime well beaten with Sand; the more Labour in the Beating, the better and stronger the Mortar. I shall say nothing of Marble (though England, Scotland, and Ireland afford good, and of beautiful Colours) but this will prove too costly for our Purpose, unless for Altar-pieces.'

For wood, next to oak he recommends a good yellow deal. For external covering, he recommends lead as being the best and lightest. He observes that 'our Tiles are ill-made, and our Slate not good . . . though I will not deny but an excellent Tile may be made to be very durable;

our Artisans are not yet instructed in it, and it is not soon done to inform them.'

I have already referred to his opinions on preachers. Looking at his actual letter, I think it is pardonable to re-quote, giving, this time, his text more fully inasmuch as it is so delightfully expressed.

'A moderate Voice,' says Wren, 'may be heard 50 Feet distant before the Preacher, 30 Feet on each side, and 20 behind the Pulpit, and not this unless the Pronunciation be distinct and equal, without losing the Voice at the last Word of the Sentence, which is commonly emphatical, and if obscur'd spoils the whole Sense.'

Then follows the passage about French voices reaching further than English. Wren condemns the dropping of the voice in the last words 'as an insufferable Fault in the Pronunciation of some of our otherwise excellent Preachers, which Schoolmasters might correct in the young as a vicious Pronunciation, and not as the Roman Orators spoke.'

Then he adds what I consider the best part of his remarks. 'For the principal Verb is in Latin usually the last Word'; and *if that be lost, what becomes of the Sentence?* The italics are mine, the common-sense reasoning, his.

In this and other quotations from Wren's writings I have kept the capital letters for the substantives, as they seem to add a periodical brilliance that fades immediately they are removed and replaced by 'smalls'; his spelling, too, is so picturesque and so delightfully inconsistent—as it was with every one in those times—that I have in all cases retained it. On the other hand, both his letters and those of Dean Sancroft are punctually incorrect, from our standard, and are sometimes a little difficult to grasp at first reading on that account. I have, therefore, taken the liberty of revising the system of punctuation in the belief that I have thereby honoured them by producing the effect they wished to convey.

We left Wren receiving his over-due payment as a Christmas present in 1711. Queen Anne must have indeed upset the Commissioners by her inquiry because a pamphlet was issued entitled 'Fraudes and Abuses at St. Paul's.'

This was written under the pretence that the parishioners of St. Mary Woolnoth (not one of Wren's churches and situated close to what is now Bank Station) had been asking in vain that the cost of the rebuilding of their church should be defrayed out of what was supposed to be a surplus fund at St. Paul's.

The writer of this abominable diatribe accused Wren of dishonest practices with regard to the estimates, practically saying that he falsified the accounts. To this was added some nonsense about the scaffolding still being up when it might have been taken down; also that Wren had not yet put up the stone balustrade on the walls, despite the fact that the Commissioners had ordered it.

Lastly, the matter concerning Jennings the carpenter was referred to, the writer declaring that a court of inquiry had dismissed him but that Wren had overridden the decree and had retained him.

That was enough for Wren. He had stood the insults hurled at himself with patience and dignity; now that one of his subordinates was being attacked he was moved to reply. He published a characteristic retort, giving details of every description, going so far as to include a complete statement of the receipts and expenditure of St. Paul's building fund.

While he was engaged in doing this, one of his friends published a quiet, but well-worded eulogy (and a strong opinion of his enemies) called 'Facts against Scandal.' The reply from the other side was another diatribe called 'A Continuation of Fraudes and Abuses at St. Paul's,' written in such a manner as to show plainly that the matter it contained was derived from statements made by a workman whom Wren had dismissed. 'Facts against Scandal,' Part Two, followed, in which the circumstances that surrounded the workman's dismissal were clearly set forth. This finally settled the whole matter, and tract-writing became a thing of the past. Public sentiment had been thoroughly roused and was entirely on Wren's side.

Despite this, worse was to follow. Queen Anne died in 1714, and George of Hanover arrived with his Court of

Germans, all in need of employment in London. Handel had reason to regret the arrival of the new King, a story well known.

George I had no more conscience than a cat ; all it was necessary to do was to offer a bribe in order to obtain anything.

When the personnel of the Commissioners entirely changed, Wren may have thought that their successors would stand by him ; if he did think so he was mistaken, for the reverse proved to be the case. Evidently they considered him past his work and neither offered consideration for his eminence nor remembered that a man of eighty-four, still in possession of all his faculties, is entitled to respect.

Wren must have seen the end coming as soon as the new Commission began to be active, the more so when he received a complaint that the crowning balustrade had not been placed in position. Wren replied as follows :

‘ I have considered the resolution of the honourable the Commissioners for adorning St. Paul’s Cathedral, dated October 15, 1717, and brought to me on the 21st, importing “ that a balustrade of stone be set up on the top of the Church unless Sir Christopher Wren do, in writing under his Hand set forth, say that it is contrary to the Principles of Architecture, and give his Opinion in a Fortnight’s time ; and if he doth not, then the Resolution of a Balustrade is to be proceeded with.” ’ This opening gives the words of the Commissioners’ letter.

‘ In Observation of this Resolution,’ wrote Wren in reply, ‘ I take leave first to declare I never designed a Balustrade. Persons of little Skill in Architecture did expect, I believe, to see something they had been used to in Gothick Architecture : and Ladies think nothing well without an Edging.’

This last remark is typical of Wren, who added that ‘ I should gladly have complied with the vulgar Taste but I suspended for the Reasons following.’

The reasons can be summarized. Wren defined a balustrade as a sort of plinth over the upper colonnade

which may be divided into balusters over open parts, but 'kept solid over solid parts,' such as over pilasters. He did not recommend a 'continued range' over a long space 'to stand alone against the high winds'; they would be 'liable to be tipped down in a row.' Instead, he advocated statues on 'the four pediments only,' which he considered proper in every way.

Then came the climax. In 1718 Wren was summarily dismissed from the Surveyorship-General and a man named Benson appointed in his stead. Benson was completely incompetent and secured the position entirely by intrigue with the Germans who came over with George I.

In the *Memoirs of John Ker of Kersland* (a Scottish spy who won favour at the Court of George I), published in 1727-8, there is an entry which confirms this view. 'It is very well known that Benson was a favourite of the Germans. So great that Sir Christopher Wren, the famous Architect who contrived the stately Edifice of St. Paul's Church and finished it in his own time, was turned out of his employment as being Master of the King's Work, which he had possessed with great Reputation, to make way for this Favourite of Foreigners.'

The next passage speaks for itself :

'Some time afterwards Benson fell under the displeasure of the House of Lords who, therefore, in the year 1719, addressed his Majesty to remove and prosecute him, and upon his Majesty's gracious answer to this Complaint he not only ordered the said Mr. Benson to be removed from his employment, but this Gentleman was to be brought to justice accordingly. But though he was removed, instead of being prosecuted he was presented with the Wharf of Whitehall worth yearly above £1500 for thirty Years.'

One imagines that this must have been due to the King's private action; it was generally possible to talk George I into doing what was required so long as one could pull the strings of intrigue in a sufficiently attractive manner.

Benson's only work at St. Paul's was a poor flight of steps at the western front; these, however, were removed in 1873, and others, of nobler dimensions, laid in their place.

The indignity of dismissal must have been extremely unpleasant to a man of Wren's age and attainments; he was eighty-five. He had held the post for nearly forty-nine years and had personally served five monarchs.

Had John Evelyn still been alive one imagines that there would have been further 'Facts against Scandal'; Evelyn was ever Wren's strongest ally. He had now been dead since 1706 and Wren was without an advocate. Looking back on the early part of Wren's career, it is almost impossible to gauge the depth of John Evelyn's friendship. Surely no man ever had such a friend! Evelyn could have obtained the Surveyorship for himself, merely by asking Charles II; such a thought, seemingly, never entered his head. Wren was the man—always Wren; Evelyn used influence on his behalf whenever occasion arose.

And now the time had come for the Surveyor to retire; he went to a house on Hampton Court Green, now known as Old Court House, to spend his remaining five years in study and contemplation, 'cheerful in Solitude and as well pleased to die in the Shade as in the Light.' So wrote Stephen Wren in *Parentalia*.

Cheerful in Solitude? Naturally. No man with such scholarship and with such illimitable resources could ever have been lonely. Loneliness is the curse of those who have permitted themselves no resources.

There is a difference between Loneliness and Solitude. Loneliness is one of the negative conditions of life—a condition, maybe, of weakness—a state in which no man was ever intended to be. Even when the ensign of life (that fluttered proudly when the morning breeze blew freshly and the sunlight was grateful) has been hauled down and furled, now that the evening mists have gathered and the night wind has begun to blow chill, no man need be lonely.

He that has essayed at any time to shun his friends that he may be alone in his misery has set himself in no good way; he that has sought Solitude so that, being in better health thereby, he may give of the grace of his friendship the more lavishly, has found Wisdom. Loneliness may indeed be feared; Solitude is never without its attraction.

It must be so, for all great men have sought it—one Man constantly.

There are times in every man's life when he must needs leave the haunts of his fellows for a space and be as much alone as is possible in a world fashioned by Someone Else. It may be near a gurgling river-head where the stately kingfisher seeks his prey in secluded majesty ; it may be on a silent, sanded shore where sea-birds scream ; it may be on a mountain-top where heatherbells ring a solemn angelus—it does not signify ; it is good for man to be alone, sometimes, to stare into the heart of a sunset and watch the deepening clouds of evening.

It is then and then only that the mind awakens to its full sense of power to build castles that need not necessarily be in the air ; it is then that man recharges the dryness of his brain-cells, burnishes the dullness of his whole being, and brings the contour of his life into clear perspective. Byron was right when he spoke of ' Solitude, where we are *least* alone.'

There is a danger when Solitude comes in closing years, but only with those who ' retire ' and discover that retirement is a poor thing at the best. Wren retired only from the actual Surveyorship to the King's Works ; his work was by no means finished. He was still Director of Works at Westminster Abbey and frequently came to London to consult those who were carrying out the restorations. For this purpose he retained his house in St. James's Street.

His life at home was devoted to study and contemplation, the former being science chiefly ; the latter included deep reading of the Scriptures. It had been a life of refinement and surrounded by religion ; it had been a life of purity in an impure age. He by no means worked out all that was in him as Haydn did ; his brain could spin an architectural story, rich in detail, at any time—even now, at eighty-five.

He crowned his career as a builder-of-churches with the tower of St. Michael's—at ninety ; he was still ready, if called upon, to build another. Haydn wrote until he had said everything he had to say ; Liszt played until he no

longer took 'any interest in his seventy-five-year-old fingers.' With Wren it was not so; the flame of genius burned as fiercely as ever, and he was still at the public service, when required, until he was sent for. That he missed Evelyn is unquestionable; he now sustained a further loss by the death of Grinling Gibbons.

Wren and Gibbons had worked together for very nearly fifty years, sharing each other's joys and sorrows almost like brothers. St. Paul's, to us, is mainly the thoughts of the two men; what did not come from one seems to have come from the other. And yet John Evelyn stands at the back of it all; in a sense it was he who discovered Wren; he it certainly was who gave Gibbons his chance.

Perhaps Evelyn thought that every time Gibbons carved a cherub he must have looked in a mirror before he began. That was my thought when, the day before actually writing these words, I played Bach for two hours on the admirable organ in St. Lawrence Jewry, prior to giving a recital there. I had been studying a picture of Gibbons in the famous vestry before going up to the organ-loft; as I played, I fell to admiring a particularly cheery cherub just in front of me, and as I patted his chubby cheeks I thought how like he was to Gibbons himself. A Gibbons cherub is a thing apart in wood-carving; there is nothing else that I have seen that is quite like it.

In 1720 a further attempt was made to humble Wren. It was rumoured that the timber roof of the Sheldonian Theatre was in danger of falling. Wren made no move; he simply awaited the result of an investigation by an expert committee. Their report was thoroughly satisfactory. 'The whole Fabrick of the said Theatre is, in our opinion, like to remain and continue in such good Repair and Condition for one hundred or two hundred Years yet to come.' So it has remained, and its Builder's reputation with it.

Once a year it became Wren's custom to drive to St. Paul's in order that he might sit for a while under the dome and look around him. For him, the great cathedral was a place of many memories. He must have cast back

in his mind over eighty years and thought of all that had led up to the building of St. Paul's. He must have thought of the homely little Rectory at East Knoyle; of his father and the troublous times at Windsor Deanery; of Westminster School and of old Busby with his Latin Grammar and ready cane; of Sir Charles Scarborough and Dr. John Wilkins; of the days when he was honoured for his learning in Oxford; of the grey days of Oliver Cromwell; of the return of Charles II and the wonderful goodness of John Evelyn, the friendship of Grinling Gibbons, James Gibbs, and the Strong family; of the Fire and the misery it caused in London; of the irrepressible Pepys and the quiet charm of Dean Sancroft; of all the trials and difficulties that had faced him in the building of his great church.

And then of April 26, 1715, when he had been dismissed in the eighty-sixth year of his age and the forty-ninth of his Surveyorship. The thought of that probably no longer troubled him as he sat contemplating his work; St. Paul's was *his*, and his alone; no one, not even a King, could take *that* thought away from him.

In the hey-day of his life there was never a moment when he was not wanted somewhere in London. The thought reminds me of a strange incident that occurred to me while writing this book. I happened to be at the house of Messrs. Methuen, waiting to interview one of the Directors with regard to the illustrations that appear herein. Casually glancing along a row of newly published books, I selected a small volume whose title attracted my eye. It was called *Kings—and Other Things*, by Hugh Chesterman.

I noticed the little sketch on the wrapper; it was rather of the *Alice-in-Wonderland* type, and the volume proved to be a collection of charming poems, most of which had an historical flavour about them. I turned idly over the pages and was somewhat taken aback at the first title—'CHRISTOPHER WREN'!

Having read the poem, I immediately asked permission to reproduce it here. Circumstance was once more strangely favourable. Two days later, at St. Paul's, I interviewed my architect friend (to whom I have made my acknow-

ledgements at the beginning of this work) and recounted my experience, only to discover that he and the author were great friends. This resulted in my meeting Mr. Chesterman and securing permission to use his poem. I give it here in full, feeling it to be a charming tribute to the memory of Wren who would himself have appreciated its delicious humour :

CHRISTOPHER WREN

'Clever men
Like Christopher Wren
Only occur just now and then.
No one expects
In perpetuity
Architects of his ingenuity.
No ; never a cleverer dipped his pen
Than clever Sir Christopher—Christopher Wren.
With his chaste designs
On classical lines,
His elegant curves and neat inclines.
For all day long he'd measure and limn
Till the ink gave out or the light grew dim.
And if a Plan
Seemed rather baroque or too "Queen Anne"
(As Plans well may)
He'd take a look at his pattern book
And do it again a different way.
And never an hour went by but when
London needed Sir Christopher Wren.
"Bride's in Fleet Street lacks a spire,"
"Mary-le-Bow a nave and choir."
"Please to send the plans complete
For a new St. Stephen's, Coleman Street."
"Pewterer's Hall
Is far too tall,
Kindly lower the N.W. wall."
"Salisbury Square
Decidedly bare,
Can you put one of your churches there ?"
"Dome of St. Paul's is not yet done,
Dean's been waiting since half-past one."
London calling
From ten till ten ;
London calling
Christopher Wren.'

In 1666 London was indeed calling him ; fifty years later, in 1716, it had no further use for him. Thus he retired, without tears, to spend a space in thought and study, going once a year to his cathedral to live the past over again in the peace of his own memory.

The last time he went was on, or about, the twenty-fifth of February, 1723. He may have lingered too long in the unwarmed building, for he caught a chill. He returned to his house at Hampton and partook of his solitary evening meal. His servant not having seen him return to the study, as was his wont, entered the dining-room to see if anything further was required. He found his master asleep in his chair—at least, so it seemed ; a second glance told him that the Surveyor was dead.¹

No illness or pain ; the fine old features were in perfect repose. What a life—and *what a death* ! May it be given to all those who read these words to go in like manner ! Just a simple passing out to what follows—nothing less, nothing more. The passing of Sir Christopher Wren was but an incident in his life, just as Life is an incident in Eternity.

They buried him close to his daughter in the crypt of the House he had builded. For over a century no memorial was erected to him ; he certainly needed none. When you next enter St. Paul's may I suggest you study the Latin inscription over the door of the north transept ? It is simple, direct, and true—like him.

To construe it is equally simple. **SUBTUS CONDITUR**—beneath lies buried—**HUJUS ECCLESIAE ET URBIS CONDITOR**—the Founder of this Church and City—**CHRISTOPHORUS WREN**—Christopher Wren—**QUI VIXIT ANNOS ULTRA NONAGINTA**—who lived more than ninety years—**NON SIBI**—not for himself—**SED BONO PUBLICO**—but for the public good.

¹ I feel I should point out that there is a little doubt in my mind regarding this. The story of the servant finding Wren dead is a fact ; it may, however, not have been on the evening of the day Wren visited the cathedral for the last time. In any case, it was either the actual day or the day following, and was a simple case of heart failure.

Finally, it addresses you yourself. **LECTOR**, it says: **LECTOR**—Reader; **SI MONUMENTUM REQUIRIS**—if it is a Monument that you want—**CIRCUMSPICE**—gaze round you!

I wonder if many people have noticed the cleverness of this inscription? It struck me, immediately I read it for the first time, that Wren's son (who was responsible for it) has made a dignified and delicate play on two words—'Conditur' and 'Conditor.'

The former has a primary meaning of *to withdraw from sight*, in the active sense; in the passive, it assumes the meaning of *to be buried*. I have read passages both in Cicero and Virgil where it is so used. *Conditor* is quite a common word, meaning a founder or even a composer; *conditur* might easily have been replaced by *sepultus* (from *sepelire*, to bury or inter), but the use of these two words of similar appearance is in the best possible taste and, to a Latinist, at once suggests that the inscription was written with perfect ease and without hesitation.

Is it necessary, at this point, to impress still further upon the reader's mind the amazing characteristics of this great English genius? To speak again of his culture and scholarship, of his great learning in science and astronomy, of his inventiveness and powers as an engineer, of his unlimited artistic resources? Or of his gentleness and sweet disposition; of his determination to meet all criticism, however irritating or ignorant, in his own courtly fashion; of his readiness to learn from any one who could teach him and to teach any one who would learn from him; of his complete loyalty to the Kings who employed him; of his great and enduring friendship for those who loved him?

In an age of dishonesty his integrity of purpose could never be truthfully challenged; in an age of debauchery he kept himself pure and undefiled; in an age of irreverence he never dishonoured his God. Christopher Wren was the greatest genius England has ever produced at *any* time in her long history. That is a bold statement, but I make it without fear of contradiction from thinking people. To

whom can any of us point as having had greater gifts or possessed a nobler character ?

I admit I did not realize it until I came to study his life and times so closely ; now that I have written what I have written, I find myself idly turning over my pages and wishing I had had the privilege of knowing him. Chesterman was right in his poem : clever men like Christopher Wren certainly occur only just now and then.

Canon Alexander, in his charming little volume *The Safety of St. Paul's*, mentions the fact that he once suggested that a memorial to Wren should be placed somewhere in the City ' on which his genius had left so deep a mark.' A friend of his guaranteed a ' princely sum,' sufficient to carry out the idea on a fitting scale, but at the outbreak of War the scheme fell through as it was felt that the needs of the cathedral itself were more pressing.

In all probability there will never be a memorial to Wren now ; it is as well, for no man ever stood less in need of one. All that any of *us* need do is to enter St. Paul's and—*gaze round us*.

CHAPTER XVI

THE RECENT RESTORATIONS AT ST. PAUL'S

EVER since St. Paul's was finished in 1710 it has periodically needed attention. There is nothing strange in the fact; few buildings of that size and weight have been able to escape a certain amount of architectural nursing. If, in their old age, they occasionally need the advice of specialists it only proves that they, like their builders, are affected by the weather and are apt to catch disease.

Wren honestly aimed at building for eternity; he said as much, definitely. Had he been given ideal conditions he would certainly have done so; as he was not given anything like ideal conditions, it is not altogether surprising that it has been necessary to remedy faults he himself could, in other circumstances, have prevented arising.

It must be remembered that he was distinctly limited in the matter of expense. It was all very well for Sancroft to wax enthusiastic and to 'take it for granted' that the money would flow in to the fund. The Dean was generously disposed; as we have seen, he gave fourteen hundred pounds. For that matter, Wren himself gave sixty—probably at some personal sacrifice.

Unfortunately, however, facts have a way of being as hard as the Portland Stone Wren used in St. Paul's, and the Surveyor was by no means slow in realizing that he would have to cut his piers according to his masonry. Thus, instead of building them of solid stone he was forced to erect them with a core of rubble, as the King's wishes in the matter were quite definite; he required at least *some* of the old material to be used. Consequently Wren was compelled to make a selection of the best of it, even though

there was a risk of any the fire had scorched proving to have become brittle.

It is easy to imagine the situation. Wren had done very well. He had brought the King and the Commission to his way of thought and had succeeded in persuading them, against their own ideas, to build a new cathedral. It would have been the height of tactlessness to have gone to them now and to have insisted that *nothing* of old St. Paul's was fit to use. Even though Wren and the King were on the best of terms, I imagine the Surveyor knew his Charles a little too well to make any further fuss at the moment. Thus we must note that the piers are not of solid Portland Stone but contain a rubble core.

The present Surveyor has pointed out that Wren used lime mortar for bedding the stone. The danger, he says, with this kind of mortar is that although it sets as hard as the stone itself where exposed to the air, that which is not in contact with the atmosphere tends to remain in a softer condition. Nowadays cement is used.

St. Paul's has always retained a Surveyor, or at least had one within calling distance; historical accounts seem to point to each of them having had plenty to do, but since 1873 nothing has been reported of a serious nature regarding the actual foundations.

The western towers have certainly stood the test of time. The portico at one period exhibited a regrettable tendency to travel down Ludgate Hill, but some manganese bronze ties were sufficient to restrain its activities. Even Great Paul, with all his weight and mighty swing, has failed to affect the clock, which he would assuredly have done had the tower not been perfectly firm.

An interesting experiment was carried out in 1907 by one of the cathedral Surveyors (Somers Clarke); he mounted to the top of one of the towers, armed with a mirror, and threw a ray of light on the other tower when a full peal of bells was ringing. There was not the slightest sign of movement; thus it has been concluded that settlements in those towers are things of the past and that there is no likelihood of further trouble, at least for the present.

On the other hand, a Commission, set up by the Dean and Chapter in the same year, reported a sinking of the dome to a depth of about $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches, while the piers had settled unequally, those on the south having sunk nearly six inches, those on the north and east only three.

Prior to this, in 1891, workmen engaged in preparing the walls of the quarter-domes for mosaics were surprised to find the stone very tender, flakes flying off as soon as they touched it. Alarming as this might well have seemed to them, expert opinion stated that there was no danger provided the same conditions of sub-soil and water-level were maintained. Much water flows beneath St. Paul's; old London streams, such as the Walbrook and the Fleet River, keep the foundations in a moist and therefore satisfactory state of preservation.

It appears that, in 1831, disaster was narrowly averted when a deep shaft was sunk outside the south portico for sewerage purposes. The Dean and Chapter acted precipitately and succeeded, after a severe struggle, in preventing the work being proceeded with. Unfortunately a quantity of sand had been removed and the flow of water thereby disturbed; even so, the foundations were not seriously affected. So long as the water-level is not interfered with or the disposition of the subsoil permitted to undergo any material change, it seems that the foundations of St. Paul's are safe.

We now come to the year 1911. The Dean and Chapter were then forced to consider afresh the problem of the safety of the cathedral. The reason was rather startling. There was a proposal for an underground tramway tunnel in connection with 'St. Paul's Bridge.' This tunnel would have passed very close to the east end of the cathedral; and had the idea been carried into effect the result would have been serious. This fact is surely emphasized when it is pointed out that as far back as 1890 it was decided that no further burials should be allowed in the nave part of the crypt, so anxious were the authorities to avoid even that much risk of interference with the foundations.

The Corporation of London, however, withdrew the proposals for both bridge and tunnel. The bridge would have been a real menace in that it might have caused subterranean water to be drawn off ; also it would have added to the general vibration caused by the traffic. Of these aspects the former was the more serious. The question of vibration caused by traffic seems to be an open one, but Sir Francis Fox has pointed out that any heavy type of omnibus is a foe rather than a friend to St. Paul's.

Burrowing underground nearly or directly below heavy buildings is rarely unattended with risk of some sort ; Mercer's Hall was cracked practically from top to bottom when the Central London Tube was constructed ; Holy Trinity, Kingsway, also suffered from underground operations of this nature.

We now come to the three appeals for funds to carry out the necessary restorations. These were severally issued in 1914 for £70,000 ; in 1922 for £100,000 ; in 1925 for about £140,000. After the last of these appeals—namely, on March 31, 1925, the cathedral was partially closed until the formal re-opening on June 25, 1930.

To give an exact account of what has been done in St. Paul's from 1914 to 1930, it would be necessary to reproduce the various Commissioners' reports. I have not considered this advisable, nor in the least necessary, if only on the grounds that it is outside the scope of this volume. On the other hand, St. Paul's is Wren's greatest work, and it would indeed be an omission did I not briefly refer to the restorations that have taken so long and been effected at so great an expenditure of public money. I propose, therefore, to give an outline of the history of the activities from 1914 to 1930, taking my facts from the Commissioners' reports.

The work begun in 1914 comprised repairs to the piers of the crypt ; the eight piers of the dome, as well as the four bastions ; the four quarter-domes ; the eight staircases leading to the dome ; the lantern and the floor of the colonnade ; the windows and lead-work in the roof ; the removal of many iron cramps and all wooden flooring. Also the grouting of all fissures.

Naturally, as the work proceeded, those in charge made various discoveries. After having held no less than fourteen meetings, the Commission decided to present an Interim Report, which they did on June 1, 1922. The main question was the dome and its supports. Briefly, the report stated that although trial holes had been sunk through the crypt floor in order to find out what was the condition of the foundations, nothing indicated that there had been recent movement or settlement. The Commission expressed the opinion that there was no need to attempt to strengthen the foundations provided that no building operations were carried out below their level in the near neighbourhood.

Above-ground the report was not so satisfactory. The Commission noted that considerable settlement had taken place in the piers and arches, but that most of it had happened during construction and had been dealt with by Wren himself. On the other hand, it was found that movement had taken place more recently which had damaged several ornamental features of the building; also the flaking (already referred to) was pointed out as having been caused by the pressure concentrated on the outer edges of the joints.

At the end of 1924, a further Interim Report was issued in which the Commission stated that the grouting of the piers would have to continue, the work already done in the north-east pier having proved satisfactory. Grouting is a system of pumping liquid cement into fissures or cavities under high pressure; the piers thus treated were reinforced with metal rods.

Then came the scare in 1925 when it was rumoured that St. Paul's dome was likely to fall into Cannon Street. I remember reading quite wild statements. Fortunately, authoritative statements quickly followed, and the public mind was more or less set at rest. At the worst, St. Paul's was considered to be in 'danger of becoming dangerous.' The fact that the Dean and Chapter were served with a 'Dangerous Structure Notice,' and also that the cathedral was partly closed, was undoubtedly the main cause of a certain amount of panic; but once the public was made

to understand that there was no actual danger of a pier with a 'weight on the Topp of it' (as Sancroft would have said) suddenly collapsing, the whole matter was viewed quite sensibly.

The final report of February 1925 is the most interesting of all to the lay mind. Careful measurements revealed the fact that the shape of the structure at the level of the Whispering Gallery was not a perfect circle; there were definite bulges over the four great arches. The diameter north to south was greater than that from east to west by $6\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

The use of precision instruments revealed the interesting fact that the drum changes (very slightly, of course) in shape, owing to the effect of the main temperature variation, tending to resume the same shape at the same time of the year. The top of the cone moves backwards and forwards under temperature changes to the extent of about one-eighth of an inch. The keystones of the arches move in sympathy with the Whispering Gallery though, seemingly, not to the same extent.

This movement, in the opinion of the experts, is a perfectly natural one; they did not suggest trying to stop it. What they objected to was the fact that the building (at the level of the Whispering Gallery) was showing tendencies to increase its circumference.

To prevent this regrettable obesity, the drums of the dome were encircled with metal hoops of immense strength and firmly embedded in concrete, so that any further tendency to be human (and to imitate the more unfortunate of us) is now definitely curtailed.

The weight of the dome, its drum and colonnade, the surrounding buttresses, the eight piers on which it rests, the eight great arches (including those sections of the walls and vaults of the choir, nave, transepts, and aisles that are carried by the piers and bastions) indeed makes spectacular reading.

The official calculation summarizes it as follows:

The weight from the top of the cross to the keys of the great arches is 23,098 tons; from the keys to the plinth

(about 4 feet above the floor) is considered to be another 28,116 tons, making a total of 51,214 tons. Continuing downwards from the plinth to the underside of the foundations is to add a further 16,056 tons, so that the total weight upon the earth, ascribable to the dome and everything that supports it, works out to be 67,270 tons. Small wonder is it that the Commission was anxious that anything in the nature of excavation should be forbidden near St. Paul's!

One imagines that the safety of the cathedral is now assured for long enough, especially as it is continually under a Surveyor's eagle and highly technical eye.

It is as well, for Wren's masterpiece is the Shrine of England. I thought so when I witnessed the ceremonies on St. George's Day, 1931. It was indeed a privilege to stand in the west gallery to watch the procession of Choir and Priests, followed by the Companions, Knights Commanders, Knights Grand Cross, the Gentleman Usher of the Blue Rod, the King of Arms, the Registrar, the Secretary, the Chancellor, and the Prelate of *The Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George*.

I could not avoid a deep sensibility of being in England. The sight of the gorgeous robes of those English Knights as they followed the robed choristers; the uplift of the organ and the band of the Coldstream Guards; the rolling of the drums; the thundering of the 32-foot pedal-stops; the singing of the quaint, modal Kieff Chant became all strangely mixed with the Renaissance thoughts of the English Knight and Gentleman whose scholarly refinement seemed to emanate from the curve of every arch.

And then the voice of the aged Prelate:

Let the Roll of our Brethren who have lately departed this life be read, ere we fall to prayer.

The sentence, as I heard it from the south-west quarter-dome, sounded cold and solemn. The Roll, as read by Blue Rod, revealed the remarkable and sad fact that no less than *one hundred and nine* deaths amongst the Knights of this Order had been notified to the Chancery between February 17, 1930, and April 10, 1931.

This makes strange contrast with any of the three previous years. No death occurred in 1928, and one each in 1927 and 1929. The names in the 1931 list, I noted, included those of General Smith-Dorrien and Lord Stamfordham.

Small wonder was it that Chopin's Funeral March, as played by the Coldstream Guards, turned my blood cold ! I forgot that it was merely an arrangement of a beautiful slow movement in his pianoforte Sonata in B flat Minor, which I have always preferred to play on the piano, and in its rightful context ; as the drums rolled on like thunder in the Alps I became sensitive to the rhythm and thought of the words of Claude Debussy, who once told me that he thought rhythm in music to be part of Creation.

Then the stirring words from the Liturgy of St. Chrysostom of Antioch, sung to the Kieff Chant :

'Give rest, O Christ, to Thy servants with Thy saints, where sorrow and pain are no more, neither sighing but life everlasting. Thou only art immortal, the Creator and Maker of man ; but we are mortal, formed of earth, and unto earth shall we return : for so didst Thou ordain when Thou createdst me, saying : *Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return.* All we go down to the dust, and weeping o'er the grave, we make our song : *Alleluia.*'

Yes ; I felt I was in England. Surely all of us must have been proud of our English birth, to have been of the same race as the Builder of the place in which we stood ? I found myself wishing that he had been there also, just to witness, in this age when culture lingers by the way and is in danger of being supplanted by so much that is uncultured and unscholarly, the procession of the Knights of the Order of those two fighting Saints—St. Michael who fought in Heaven, St. George who fought on Earth.

Would not he, Sir Christopher Wren, Gentleman, Scholar, Knight of the Realm of His Majesty King Charles the Second, have lifted his whole being in the thought :

For God, for St. George, and for Merie England ?

CLASSIFIED LIST

OF SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN'S WORKS

ECCLESIASTICAL BUILDINGS IN LONDON

1. Mary-le-Bow (Steeple, 1680) 1671-3
2. Mary-at-Hill 1682-7
3. Michael, Cornhill (Tower, 1721) 1672
4. Stephen, Walbrook (Tower, 1681) 1672-9
5. ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL: Foundation Stone laid
June 21, 1675; Choir opened for Service, De-
cember 2, 1697. Dome finished 1710 1675-1710
6. Magnus-the-Martyr, London Bridge (Steeple, 1705) 1676
7. Stephen, Coleman Street 1676
8. Lawrence Jewry 1676
9. James, Garlickhithe 1677-83
10. Nicholas, Cole Abbey 1677
11. Mary Aldermanbury 1677
12. Swithin, London Stone (Cannon Street) 1678-9
13. Anne and Agnes, Aldersgate 1679-80
14. Clement Danes, Strand (Steeple by Gibbs, 1719) 1680
15. Bride, Fleet Street (Steeple, 1700) 1680
16. All Hallows, Bread Street 1681-4
17. Peter, Cornhill 1681-2
18. Mary Aldermay (Tower rebuilt 1711) 1682
19. James, Piccadilly (Tower not by Wren) 1683
20. Mildred, Bread Street 1683
21. Augustine and Faith, Watling Street 1683
22. Clement, Eastcheap 1683-6
23. Benet, Paul's Wharf 1683-4
24. Martin, Ludgate Hill 1684-5
25. Alban, Wood Street 1685
26. Mary Abchurch 1686
27. Christ Church, Newgate Street (Steeple, 1704) 1687
28. Margaret Pattens, Rood Lane 1687
29. Andrew, Holborn 1687
30. Edmund, King and Martyr, Lombard Street 1689-90
31. All Hallows, Barking-by-the-Tower 1689
32. Margaret, Lothbury 1690
33. Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe 1692
34. All Hallows, Lombard Street 1693
35. Michael Royal, College Hill 1694
36. Vedast, Foster Lane 1695
37. Dunstan-in-the-East (Tower only) 1698-9

ECCLESIASTICAL BUILDINGS IN LONDON, NOW DESTROYED

38. Christopher-le-Stocks (destroyed for Bank of England)	1671
39. Benet Fink (destroyed 1843 for Royal Exchange)	1673-6
40. Olave Jewry (destroyed 1887)	1673-6
41. Dionis Backchurch (destroyed 1876)	1674
42. George, Botolph Lane (destroyed 1905)	1674-7
43. Michael, Wood Street (destroyed 1876)	1675
44. Mildred, Poultry (destroyed 1872)	1676-7
45. Michael, Queenhithe (destroyed 1876)	1677
46. Michael Bassishaw (destroyed 1876)	1678-9
47. Bartholomew-by-the-Exchange (destroyed 1841 for Sun Fire Office)	1679
48. Antholin, Watling Street (destroyed 1875)	1682
49. All Hallows-the-Great (destroyed 1896)	1683
50. Mary Magdalen, Knightrider Street (destroyed 1886 after a fire)	1685
51. Benet, Gracechurch Street (destroyed 1867)	1685
52. Matthew, Friday Street (destroyed 1886)	1685
53. Michael, Crooked Lane (destroyed 1831 for approach to London Bridge)	1688
54. Mary Somerset, Thames Street (destroyed 1872, Tower standing)	1695

SECULAR BUILDINGS IN LONDON

55. Storehouse in the Tower.	1664
56. Pewterers Hall	1668
57. Temple Park (removed from Strand to Theobald's Park)	1670-2
58. Monument.	1671-7
59. Pedestal of Charles I Monument, Charing Cross	1678
60. King's Bench Walk, Temple	1678
61. Chelsea Hospital	1682-92
62. Middle Temple Gateway	1684-8
63. Kensington Palace	1690-1706
64. Hampton: Fountain Court, etc.	1689-94
65. Road from Hyde Park Corner to Kensington	1692
66. Morden College, Blackheath	1695
67. Marlborough House	1698
68. Greenwich Hospital	1696-1705
69. Orangery, Kensington	1704-6
70. Greenwich Observatory	1675

SECULAR BUILDINGS IN LONDON, NOW DESTROYED

71. Guildhall (repairs destroyed by Dance)	1669-71
72. Royal Exchange (destroyed by fire, 1838)	1668-9
73. Custom House (destroyed by fire, 1718)	1668
74. Mercers Hall (re-erected at Swanage, 1882)	1670
75. Armoury Tower (destroyed by fire, 1841)	1672

CLASSIFIED LIST OF WREN'S WORKS 265

76. Drury Lane Theatre (pulled down, 1791)	1674
77. Latin School, Christ's Hospital (destroyed 1825)	1682
78. Archbishop Tenison's Library (destroyed for National Gallery)	1688
79. Mint in the Tower (destroyed)	1691
80. College of Physicians, Warwick Lane (destroyed 1866)	1688

PROVINCIAL WORKS

81. Ely : Doorway in north transept, and lobby of south transept in the cathedral	1663
82. Cambridge : Pembroke College Chapel and part of cloister	1663-6
83. Oxford Second Quadrangle at Trinity College	1667-82
84. Salisbury : repairs to Cathedral spire	1668
85. Oxford : Sheldonian Theatre	1669
86. Cambridge Emmanuel College Chapel	1669-77
87. Cambridge Trinity College Library	1673-9
88. Arbury : House (Stables only now standing)	1674
89. Dublin : Kilmainham Hospital	1680-6
90. Oxford : Tom Tower	1681-2
91. Winchester Palace (not completed : portion now barracks)	1683-5
92. Chichester : Repairs to Cathedral spire and two houses	1684
93. Oxfordshire : Fawley Court	1684
94. Windsor : Town Hall	1688
95. Appelby : School	1694
96. Warwick : Tower of St. Mary's Church	1695
97. Isleworth : All Saints (much restored)	1701-5

Wren also effected much restoration at Westminster Abbey, being Director of Works from 1697 to his death. This work has almost entirely disappeared.

WORKS ATTRIBUTED TO WREN BUT WHICH HAVE NO DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

98. Cambridge : Bishop's Hostel	1670
99. London : Brewers Hall	1670
100. Ingestre : Parish Church	1676
101. Oxford : Ashmolean Museum	1681-3
102. Grantham : Belton Hall	1685-9
103. Rochester : Guildhall	1687

INDEX

'Adoration of the Deity,' 183
 Alberti, 69
 Alexander, Canon, 254
 Anne, Queen, 12, 224, 240
 Appleby School, 222, 228
 Apprentices' Attack, 12
 Architectural Terms (Glossary), 143, 144
 Arundel House, 111
 Ashmolean Museum, 228
 Aubrey, John, 13, 24

 Bach, J. S., 1, 137, 138, 148, 163, 175, 249
 Barrow, Isaac, 9, 42, 50, 212, 213
 Bateman, Dr., 62
 Bathurst, Dr., 207, 208, 209
 Baxter, Richard, 53
 Beaufort, Thomas, 218
 Bede, the Venerable, 51, 65, 66
 Belton Hall, 228
 Benson, 247
 Berkeley, Lord, 63
 Bernini, Signor, 63, 208
 Bird, Francis, 122, 150
 Blow, Dr. John, 163, 164
 Boyle, Robert, 17, 19, 26, 50
 Bradley, Langley, 151
 Breton, Dr., 111
 Brookway, Robert, 15
 Brouncker, Lord, 48, 50, 73
 Burne-Jones, 188
 Busby, Dr. Richard, 4, 8-11, 12, 14, 18, 64
 Butler, Samuel, 44

 Camden, William, 8, 9
 Catherine, Queen, 43
 Charles I, 3, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 20, 21, 27, 28, 36, 37, 44, 52, 71, 168, 229
 Charles II, 12, 14, 23, 26, 36-39, 41, 43, 44, 45, 48, 67, 74, 99, 101, 168, 177, 217
 Charles Louis, 6, 13, 17
 Chelsea Hospital, 215, 216
 Chesterman, Hugh, 250, 251, 254
 Chichley, 'Mr.', 77, 78, 80, 81, 98
 Compton, Bishop, 237

CHURCHES, CITY—
 Alban, Wood Street, 186
 All Hallows, Barking, 187
 Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe, 187
 Anne and Agnes, Aldersgate, 186
 Benet, Paul's Wharf, 183
 Bride, Fleet Street, 137, 178, 180
 Christ Church, Newgate Street, 149, 175, 187
 Dunstan-in-the-East, 129, 149
 Edmund, King and Martyr, 188
 Faith, Watling Street, 186
 James, Garlickhithe, 188
 James, Piccadilly, 189
 Lawrence, Jewry, 174
 Magnus-the-Martyr, 169, 188
 Margaret Pattens, 185
 Margaret, Lothbury, 185
 Martin, Ludgate Hill, 186
 Mary Abchurch, 184
 Mary Aldermanbury, 177
 Mary Aldermary, 181, 187
 Mary-at-Hill, 184, 185
 Mary-le-Bow, 149, 177
 Michael, Cornhill, 149, 171, 180
 Mildred, Bread Street, 169, 184
 Nicholas, Cole Abbey, 188
 Peter, Cornhill, 172, 186
 Stephen, Coleman Street, 185
 Stephen, Walbrook, 169, 228
 Swithin, London Stone, 184
 Vedast, Foster Lane, 149, 186
 Churches (demolished), 232
 Churches (under Queen Anne scheme), 241
 Cibber, 152, 212, 222
 Clarendon, 206
 Clavis Mathematica, 16
 Claypole family, 33
 Clifford, William, 16
 Coghill, Faith (first Lady Wren), 127, 128
 Cox, Mary (Wren's mother), 2
 Cox, Robert, 2
 Cromwell, Oliver, 7, 12, 17, 18, 26, 27, 28, 30, 33, 38, 44

- 'Dangerous Structure Notice,'
119, 259
Defoe, Daniel, 54
Denham, Sir John, 43, 44, 45, 105
'Descent from the Cross' (Rubens),
185
Dugdale, Sir William, 71
- Earle, Bishop, 72
East Knoyle, 2, 15, 30
Edward I, 72
Elizabeth, Queen, 40, 67, 218
Emmanuel College, 111
Ethelbert, King of Kent, 65, 66
Evelyn, John, 18, 22, 23, 28, 29, 43,
44, 45, 50, 64, 74, 75, 76-78, 82,
98, 101, 119-121, 136, 137, 145,
211, 216, 247; Diary quoted, 26,
29, 33, 36, 41, 50, 76-78, 89, 91,
216, 224
- Falconbridge, Lady, 33
Fawley Court, 228
FitzWilliam, Jane (second Lady
Wren), 129
Flamsteed, John, 225
Fogg, 13
Fountain Court, 221
Fox, Sir Francis, 258
Fox, Sir Stephen, 215
Franklin, Benjamin, 68, 130
Fulk, Bishop, 67
- Gale, Thomas, 212
Geometrical Staircase, 159
Gibbons, Grinling, 74, 118-121, 157,
172, 175, 178, 180, 214, 221, 249
Gibbs, 180, 205
Goddard, Dr., 35, 36
Gothic Style, 60, 62, 69, 74, 80, 85,
112-116, 154, 171, 181-182, 204
Gowrie, Earl of, 73
Great Haseley, 3, 15
Great Paul, 150-151
Greenwich Hospital, 190, 218
Greenwich Observatory, 224
Gregory the Great, 66
Gresham, Sir Thomas, 32
Grimthorpe, Lord, 151
Gwynn, Nell, 217
- Hampton Court Green, 247
Hampton Court Palace, 219
Handel, G. F., 159, 233
Hawksmoor, 218
Henrietta, Queen, 37, 38, 39, 87
Henry I, 67
Henry III, 67
Henry IV, 72
- Henry VIII, 218, 219
Holder, Dr., 4, 5, 13, 16, 30, 64
Honywood Library, 214
Horrocks, 225
Horton, Dr., 35
Howard, Henry, 111
Hunt, Holman, 157, 177
- James I, 40, 52, 68, 73
James II, 12, 57, 58, 75, 76, 189, 220
Jeffreys, Judge, 177
Jennings, 237, 245
Jones, Inigo, 20, 45, 68-70, 82, 83,
86, 125, 218
Jonson, Ben, 69
Juxon, Bishop, 14, 206
- Kensington Palace, 224
Kent, William, 224
Ker, John, 246
Kilmainham Hospital, 215
King's Bench Walk, 228
- Laud, Archbishop, 11, 14, 36, 71
'Light of the World,' 157, 177
- LONDON—
Mediaeval, 85, 88
Plans for, 101-104
Stuart, 86-88
- Macartney, Sir Mervyn, 146
Maine, Jonathan, 157
Mansard, Monsieur, 208
Maroccos Extaticus, 71
Mary I, 218
Mary II, 218, 221, 222
Master Carvers, 122
Maurice, Bishop, 66, 67
Mellitus, Bishop, 65, 66
Mendelssohn, Felix, 173, 175, 176
Middle Temple, 228
Milton, 180
Monument, 211
Moray, Sir Robert, 41
Morden College, 228
- Neile, Sir Paul, 41, 43
Newman, J. H., 168
Newton, Sir Isaac, 42, 212, 225
Niffen, John, 15
Novello, Vincent, 175-176
- Osborn, Francis, 70
Oughtred, William, 16, 17, 19, 20, 38
- Palladio, 68, 69
Parentalia, 2, 3, 4, 6, 22, 24, 32, 128,
146, 220, 247
Parliament, the Long, 11

- Paul's Cross, 73, 133
 Pendentives, 144, 152, 183
 Pepys, Samuel, 26, 86, 87, 119, 180;
 Diary quoted, 26, 53, 55-59, 73,
 92-100
 Pierce, 212
 Pliny, 117-118
 Prat, 'Mr.', 77, 78, 80, 81, 98
 Princes in the Tower, 226
 Pugin, 154

 Redmayne, Elizabeth, 9
 Renaissance, 61, 74, 78, 80, 85, 154,
 158, 179
 Restitutut, Bishop, 65
 Richmond, Sir William, 157
 Robinson, Thomas, 122, 157
 Rockstro, W. R., 175-176
 Rogers, W. Gibbe, 180
 Rooke, Lawrence, 31, 41, 42
 Royal Society, 18, 25, 26, 41, 42,
 43, 46, 48, 56, 58, 111, 212, 217,
 225
 Rump Parliament, 20
 Ryves, Dean, 39

 St. Albans, Earl of, 60, 62, 189
 Salisbury Cathedral, 112-116
 Salviati, 156
 Sancroft, Dean, 14, 75, 76, 81, 83,
 85, 88, 112, 124-127, 131, 237
 Savile, Sir H., 40
 Scarborough, Sir Charles, 16, 17, 18,
 19
 Serlio, 210
 Seven Bishops, Trial of, 75
 Sheldon, Gilbert, 14, 46, 206-207,
 213
 Sheldonian Theatre, 50, 206, 213,
 249
 Shepheard, William, 4
 Sherlock, Dean, 237-238
 Sprat, Thomas, 25, 26, 35, 47, 193,
 229
 Stow, John, 80, 83
 Strafford, Earl of, 11, 12, 36
 Strong family, 121

 Talman, 223, 233
 Taswell, William, 90, 91
 Temple Bar, 209
 Temple of Diana of the Ephesians,
 117-118
 Tenison, Archbishop, 222

 Thornhill, Sir James, 152, 158-159,
 183, 219
 Tijou, 121, 158, 221
 Tintoretto, 119
 Tom Tower, 226
 Tower of London, 226, 228
 Trinity College, Cambridge, 212;
 Oxford, 207

 Vincent, Thomas, 54, 55
 Vitruvius, 69

 Ward, Seth, 16, 40
 Weaver, 71
 Westminster Abbey, 10, 25, 66,
 193-205, 248
 Whitehall Palace, 20
 Wilkins, Dr. John, 17, 18, 22, 23,
 24, 28, 29, 31, 33, 42, 45, 174, 213
 William I, 66
 William II, 66, 67
 William III, 12, 58, 75, 189, 220,
 221, 222, 224
 Willis, Thomas, 25, 52
 Winchester Palace, 231
 Windsor Chapel, 6
 Windsor Deanery, 3, 4, 6, 17
 Windsor Town Hall, 227
 Wood, Anthony à, 14
 Wood, Philip, 122
 Wren, Bishop Matthew, 4, 11, 12,
 33, 34, 35
 Wren, Christopher, junior, 2, 128
 Wren, Dean, 2, 4, 5, 6, 11, 13, 15,
 16, 18, 20, 30, 36, 39, 64
 Wren, family, 2, 129
 Wren, Matthew, 35, 43
 Wren, Susan (Mrs. Holder), 13, 14,
 127
 WREN, SIR CHRISTOPHER—
 Fellow of All Souls, 29, 31, 46
 Honorary degrees, 41, 130
 Degrees by Examination, 23
 Engagement of, 127
 Marriage, 128
 Knighthood, 129
 Plans new London, 102-104
 President of the Royal Society
 130
 Member of Parliament, 220, 227
 Dismissed from Surveyorship,
 246
 Inventions of, 17, 24, 25, 29, 40
 Death, 252

